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Chairman: Mr. Majoor ..... (Netherlands)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

1. **The Chairman** recalled that the current year was the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and encouraged Committee members to focus on what united them rather than on what divided them in their efforts to further strengthen human rights for all. They could take the first article of that Declaration as the guiding principle of their work.

Organization of work (A/63/250 and Corr.1; A/C.3/63/1 and A/C.3/63/2; A/C.3/63/L.1 and Add.1)

2. **The Chairman** said that the list of agenda items allocated to the Third Committee was contained in document A/C.3/63/L.1. The allocation of agenda item 58, on the report of the Human Rights Council, was still under consideration by the General Committee. He drew attention to chapter II of the report of the General Committee (A/61/250), which contained guidelines with regard to the conduct of work. Diligence and discipline would be required to complete the programme of work, and he called on delegations to help improve the utilization rate factor of time allocated to the Third Committee. He highlighted the guidelines relating to the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the length of resolutions, and the need to allow sufficient time for the preparation of estimates of expenditures by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee. Delegations should respect the timetable of the programme of work as far as possible.

3. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) read out a list of the names of the 26 special procedure mandate holders who would be presenting reports at the current session.

4. **The Chairman** said he took it that, following established practice, the Committee wished to extend invitations to the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council and the chairpersons of treaty bodies or working groups, as read out by the Secretary, to present their reports to the Committee at the current session.

5. *It was so decided.*

6. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) expressed concern that many documents needed for the work of the Committee had not yet been issued and hoped that they would be made available as soon as possible. With regard to agenda item 58 on the report of the Human Rights Council, she reiterated Egypt's position, which was aligned with the position of the African Group in 2006 and 2007, that the report should be allocated to the Third Committee. It was important to engage in an interactive discussion on the report at the time of its introduction by the President of the Human Rights Council. Her delegation also urged the General Committee to take a decision on that issue promptly and avoid the delay that had occurred in the past.

7. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the programme of work as contained in document A/C.3/63/L.1 and Add.1, together with the provisions contained therein, as orally revised and with the understanding that the programme of work would be adjusted if the situation warranted.

8. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 119: Programme planning (A/63/6 (Part One), A/63/6 (Prog. 19); A/C.3/63/2)

9. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would consider the Human Rights Proposed Strategic Framework for the period 2010-2011, which was contained in document A/63/6 (Prog. 19). He had appointed two facilitators to guide the consultations: Ms. Natalie Kholi of Switzerland and Mr. Lotfi Bouchaara of Morocco.

10. **Mr. Amorós Nuñez** (Cuba) said that, although his delegation had every confidence in the work of the facilitators, the past practice of the Committee had been for a member of the Bureau to conduct the negotiating process. He hoped to see that tradition continued in the future. In relation to the budgetary and programme activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the negotiations should always take into account the intergovernmental mandates on human rights, particularly those defined by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Committee should reject any proposal that was not in line with what had already been negotiated and defined by the intergovernmental human rights bodies.

11. General Assembly resolution 48/141, which had created the post of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, also offered guidance in relation to programme 19,

including the work of the Office of the High Commissioner to support human rights bodies such as the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee. It was also important to adhere to the budget and programming guidelines approved by the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee. One of those guidelines was to measure and monitor the work of the Secretariat, rather than that of the Member States.

12. The right to development was a fundamental issue that had guided the Office of the High Commissioner in relation to subprogramme 1. In that context, the Organization's supporting efforts to counter racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance were important. Proper support and follow-up should be provided for the Durban Review Conference. Under that programme there should be no mixing of the work and functions of the different human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, especially in relation to the treaty bodies and the special procedures, which were mechanisms with distinct mandates and specificities. Any linking of those institutions ran the risk of "contaminating" the work of the treaty bodies with the kind of manipulation that had occurred with some special procedures.

13. The work of the treaty bodies should follow the intergovernmental guidelines established for that purpose, especially those defined by the States parties to the instruments that governed those bodies. Priority should not be given to certain procedures and mechanisms established in the sphere of civil and political rights, or those linked to specific country situations, at the expense of others concerned with economic, social and cultural rights.

14. In view of the evident enthusiasm for broadening the field presence of United Nations human rights bodies and for the expansion of the rapid response capacity of the Organization in that area, it was important to apply the principle that human rights were universal, indivisible and interdependent. It was unacceptable that field activities were concerned only with developing countries and that human rights efforts did not also relate to the industrialized countries. Lastly, attention should be given to applying the principle of consent to promote the new activities in the area of human rights.

Agenda item 55: Social development

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/63/133)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (A/63/183 and A/63/184)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/63/95)

(d) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (A/63/172)

(e) Review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/63/183)

15. **Mr. Sha** Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the work of the Committee provided guidance to ensure that social and human rights considerations led the work of the United Nations in all areas of development. The internationally agreed development goals — together with international human rights instruments — provided a shared framework for common efforts to build better and prosperous societies for all and to put people at the centre of development. The recent high-level events relating to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Africa's development needs had reaffirmed that, in order to achieve enduring development for all, they needed to build on a shared strategy for economic and social development, articulated from those commitments.

16. The projected global economic slowdown and the food and fuel crises jeopardized the gains made towards the MDGs. It was too early to assess the full impact of those crises on global poverty, but they clearly posed serious challenges to the social development agenda. Past the midway point to the target date of 2015, despite significant progress in various areas, there were still serious challenges that affected the well-being of all people, especially the world's poorest and most vulnerable. Over a billion people still lived in poverty and hunger. Many more did not have productive work, let alone social protection. Further efforts were needed in social development and human rights in a period of

increasing economic uncertainty to foster pro-poor growth. Strong global partnerships were required to promote social development and advance social protection. As shown by the first report of the Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force, additional collective efforts were needed to meet international commitments.

17. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had entered into force in May 2008, only 14 months after it was opened to signature. Forty-one member States had ratified the Convention, and 25 had ratified its Optional Protocol. The goal should be universal ratification, as the Convention covered the needs of 650 million persons with disabilities, 80 per cent of whom lived in developing countries. The first Conference of States Parties to the Convention would soon meet to elect members of the expert committee that would review compliance with the Convention and provide guidance for its implementation.

18. The report on the fifth quinquennial review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/63/183) would soon be considered. Progress had been made, but there was still much to do to ensure full participation in society for persons with disabilities. He urged the Committee to act on recommendations contained in the report concerning the mainstreaming of the disability perspective in development programmes and policies. Attending the Paralympics, held in September 2008 in Beijing, he had been struck by the skill and determination shown by disabled people in their daily lives.

19. September 2008 had marked the first anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a global normative framework for the well-being and human rights of indigenous peoples. In 2008, the Declaration had been followed with the United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues. Such instruments created new momentum; but in order to accelerate progress, robust cooperation between Member States and the United Nations system would be needed.

20. Another pressing economic and social issue was that of ageing. The report on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/63/95) pointed to several legislative achievements, but further action would be necessary in order to address age discrimination and neglect and abuse of older persons. Strategic guidance from the General Assembly would be required, alongside bold new social protection initiatives in order to step up implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the next five years.

21. The High-level Event on the MDGs held at United Nations Headquarters on 25 September 2008 had reaffirmed that gender equality and women's empowerment were critical in order to achieve those goals. Challenges included ensuring that at least as many girls as boys completed their education; preventing the deaths of women in childbirth; and strengthening women's economic, social and political emancipation. The Secretary-General had launched a campaign to unite to end violence against women and girls. That campaign would rely on the input of all Member States, and in particular of the Committee.

22. **Ms. Stamatopoulou** (Acting Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) introduced the reports of the Secretary-General under consideration under agenda items 55 (a), (c) and (e). The report in document A/63/133 provided an overview of the deliberations held on the priority theme "Promoting full employment and decent work for all" and issues pertaining to social groups during the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development. It examined the emerging issues of social protection, youth employment and mainstreaming disability in the development agenda. It made a series of recommendations regarding the promotion of employment and decent work; investment in education, training and skills development; and addressing violence in the work environment.

23. Document A/63/95 summarized the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing completed in 2008. Significant progress had been made on the relevant issues; however, obstacles remained, largely as a result of limited national capacity. The report also provided an outline of the strategic implementation framework requested by the General Assembly in resolution 62/130, and stressed the need to link that framework to evidence-based policymaking at the national level.

24. Document A/63/183 consisted of a review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The report focused on

the emergence of a new normative and policy architecture, the process of implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the emergence of regional action plans and programmes, and the expanded constituencies for the advancement of persons with disabilities.

25. **Ms. Pansieri** (Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteer Programme), introducing the report on follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers in 2001 (A/63/184), said that it was the third such report submitted by the Secretary-General and drew on feedback from Member States, international agencies and other stakeholders, giving a consolidated outline of progress thus far. It stressed that volunteering was embedded in almost every culture, albeit in different ways and it pointed to four areas in which progress had been achieved. The report concluded with a series of recommendations, which included the need for adaptability to country situations; focusing on the role of the private sector, the research community and young people; and addressing environmental considerations. It also considered ways to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers and to heighten awareness of their contribution to the work of the United Nations.

26. She noted that there was growing concern about the feasibility of attaining many of the MDGs. Although volunteering alone was not enough, its often unrecognized impact could be channelled to support collective action. The adoption of a General Assembly resolution would help guide and inspire the organizations around the world that made use of volunteers. Lastly, she was grateful to the Governments of Brazil and Japan, which had taken initiatives to facilitate dialogue on the topic.

27. **Mr. Richmond** (Director, Division for the Coordination of United Nations Priorities in Education, United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) introduced the report on the implementation of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade (A/63/172), which had been prepared by UNESCO in accordance with its mandated role as coordinating agency for the Decade. The report was the outcome of a wide-ranging consultation undertaken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/140. It found that literacy was not progressing rapidly enough to meet the MDGs or the Education for All (EFA) goals, and that marginal groups and women and girls continued to be a particular concern. The report singled out three priorities for the second half of the Decade: greater commitment to literacy among all partners, greater capacity to deliver high-quality literacy programmes, and new resources both from national budgets and through international aid.

28. **Mr. Rastam** (Malaysia) asked about the views of the United Nations on how to address and limit the impact of the food, energy and financial crises. He wondered what approaches would be taken to ensure that social development goals were not affected, or whether, given the crises, goals would be reset.

29. **Mr. Alakhder** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) requested elaboration on the role of the private sector in working with volunteers.

30. **Mr. Ballestero** (Costa Rica) said that, while it appeared that the view of the Secretariat was that the rights to education, employment and full participation in society for people with disabilities arose solely from the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, in fact the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities made specific reference to cultural, social and economic rights. For that reason, the Convention should become universal.

31. **Mr. Amorós Núñez** (Cuba), following up on the question put by the representative of Malaysia, asked whether the Secretariat had assessed or planned to assess the impact of the current crises on the achievement of social development goals, especially with regard to the commitment to full employment. Historically, the goals had emphasized economic development rather than social support. He wondered whether that approach would continue to hold sway. Referring to the comments by Mr. Richmond regarding the use of new information technologies in literacy programmes, he noted that most illiterate adults had little or no access to information technology and asked whether more accessible technologies such as television and radio would be used.

32. **Ms. Taracena Secaira** (Guatemala) said that the literacy programme described by Mr. Richmond primarily targeted large countries, but that there were small countries, such as hers, which not only had extremely high illiteracy rates but also had ethnic and cultural issues which complicated the task of spreading literacy. She asked what approaches were being taken in the case of small countries with high illiteracy rates.

33. **Mr. Olukanni** (Nigeria) asked whether, in view of the recent economic turmoil, development dates and goals would have to be changed, and what impact the crises would have on the African development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.

34. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) asked whether a preliminary assessment of the impact of the crises on social development and the Millennium Development Goals would be available before the forty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development in early 2009, as, absent such an assessment, discussion would take place in a void. In addition, she requested further information on UNESCO programmes aimed at improving the quality of education in developing countries.

35. **Ms. Stamatopoulou** (Acting Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), responding to the questions posed by several Member States, said that it was clear that the crises were having an impact on the most disadvantaged groups. No assessment by United Nations agencies had yet been carried out. The financial system must support equitable, sustained economic growth, with more effective regulation, counter-cyclical institutions and risk monitoring. Social policy must be more universal.

36. There would be discussions in the Commission for Social Development on the implications of the crises for Africa. In reference to the question posed by the representative of Costa Rica, she said that cultural, economic and social rights were indeed enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In answer to the question posed by the representative of Guatemala, she stressed that literacy programmes in countries with indigenous populations must be culturally relevant so that children were not "pushed out" of the education system.

37. **Ms. Pansieri** (Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteer Programme), responding to the request from the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, stressed the importance of private-public cooperation in the area of volunteerism, stating that the private sector had a major role to play. Senior-level professionals had a strong desire to contribute to social development, and volunteering provided such an opportunity. The Teach India campaign, organized by *The Times of India*, a privately-owned newspaper, had placed over 100,000 graduates as teachers in underserved schools, providing the graduates with professional experience and the schools with much-needed trained staff. Another benefit of voluntarism was that it could be carried out over the Internet, enabling people with disabilities to participate in society.

38. **Mr. Richmond** (Director, Division for the Coordination of United Nations Priorities in Education, United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said, in response to the question from the representative of Cuba, that the context of literacy was constantly changing and that digital opportunities should be taken advantage of. At the same time, it was necessary to adapt to conditions and use more accessible media, such as television and radio. Face-to-face contact was also an important component of voluntarism. Responding to the concerns expressed by the representative of Guatemala, he said that attempts were being made to develop local-scale, culturally appropriate programmes in local and indigenous languages.

39. In reply to the question posed by the representative of Egypt, he stated that many children left school with inadequate preparation due to overcrowded classrooms, a lack of resources and poorly trained teachers. One goal was to stop the flow of illiterate graduates and, in that connection, the World Bank and UNESCO supported Governments that worked to improve curricula and teacher training. Overall improvements were needed in education, not just in the teaching of particular skills, and education must be culturally relevant. Children fared better in school when their parents or siblings were literate.

40. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) noted that according to paragraph 73 of document A/63/183, the Office of the Special Rapporteur on disability had in 2008 initiated activities related to war and conflict situations and persons with disabilities. However, the findings and recommendations made no reference to the situation of disabled persons in war and armed conflict, including foreign occupation. She therefore wished to know of any proposals or ideas addressing the issue from the standpoint of global development cooperation.

41. **Ms. Stamatopoulou** (Acting Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that she would have to consult with colleagues before responding to the

question posed by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

42. **Ms. Akbar** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the current financial, food, climate and energy crises were contributing to a worsening of economic and social conditions, especially for the most vulnerable members of society. The impact of those crises on the United Nations social agenda must be evaluated in the context of the important work to implement the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

43. The significance of employment creation and decent work for poverty eradication and social integration had been highlighted at the World Summit and twenty-fourth special session, at the July 2006 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council and in the Millennium Declaration in the context of realization of the Millennium Development Goals. She therefore stressed the need for an integrated approach to full employment and decent work based on such criteria as equity, equality, security and dignity.

44. She welcomed the continued focus on women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, whose contributions were essential for social stability, economic growth and poverty eradication, and also the emphasis in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/133) on the need for investment in education, training and skills development and noted with interest the proposals related to the development of national action plans on youth employment. Employment generation in general must be at the centre of macroeconomic policy and national development and poverty reduction strategies, and she agreed that the goals of full employment and decent work could not be separated from the need for a more enabling international economic environment based on fair trade practices and sound financial systems that supported development.

45. An enabling environment for enterprise development must be created in both rural and urban areas, including the promotion of micro, small and medium enterprises. The increase in food prices had highlighted the need to strengthen agricultural development in the developing countries, but she stressed that increased production must be accompanied by increased access to credit and markets.

46. Major conferences and summits over the preceding two decades had helped identify the major social and economic challenges facing the international community. Implementation of the related resolutions had however become increasingly complicated on a practical level, and there seemed to be less political will to cooperate with a view to ensuring their implementation. Enhanced international cooperation and partnership was crucial to efforts to translate the promises of the past twenty years, for example the Millennium Development Goals, and in particular goal 8, to develop a global partnership for development, into concrete action.

47. **Mr. Fieschi** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Liechtenstein, Moldova and Ukraine, said that the World Summit on Social Development and subsequent related international conferences had reaffirmed the importance of social development and the promotion of well-being for all and mobilized the international community for the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

48. Thirteen years after the World Summit, however, much remained to be done. The follow-up to the World Summit and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly provided a framework for social development goals. Those goals must be implemented in the context of poverty eradication efforts with a view to promoting full employment and increased social integration. Social issues must likewise be integrated into national economic policies in order to ensure that human and social challenges were taken into account in the globalization process.

49. To that end, the European Union promoted economic, social and cultural rights and international labour standards, in particular by strengthening its cooperation with the developing countries and promoting decent work as a positive factor for development. It believed that a social contract for the twenty-first century was more necessary than ever and remained committed to implementing all internationally agreed social development goals.

50. An ageing population constituted a challenge for governments and societies, and too many older persons were excluded from the social system and marginalized, in both rich and developing countries. National social policies must include measures to promote the well-being and dignity of older persons by guaranteeing them secure and decent living conditions, free of need. Their basic needs must likewise be met, and they should have easy access to health care. The European Union for example devoted particular attention to the situation of very old women, who were particularly vulnerable to material insecurity and poverty. Nevertheless, nearly ten years after the declaration of the International Year of Older Persons much remained to be done to assist the elderly in their daily lives. The international community must make a greater collaborative effort to address the precarious situation of the elderly and implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

51. The United Nations International Youth Year in 1985, the special sessions of the General Assembly in 1985 and 1995 and the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond had influenced youth-related policies in many countries. Given that the one fifth of the current population of the world was between 15 and 24 years old, it was more important than ever to implement the World Programme of Action at the national level. Education, an internationally recognized fundamental right, was the key to economic and social development, equality, dignity and lasting peace. He therefore welcomed the political and financial commitments made at the recent high-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the commitment to providing $4.5 billion for the Education for All programme.

52. The declaration of the United Nations Literacy Decade in 2003 had underscored the importance of literacy in the context of achieving of the goal of education for all. The European Union supported international efforts to increase literacy, in particular for women and marginalized groups, and acknowledged the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to lead the campaign for literacy and education for all. More than 75 million children nevertheless still did not have access to education, and 774 million adults and young people could not read or write. That was unacceptable and the Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade must be continued with a view to achieving the shared objective of literacy for all.

53. Approximately 10 per cent of the world population, or 650 million persons, suffered from some sort of disability, aggravated by discrimination of various types. The disabled continued to be marginalized despite relevant international human rights instruments. Accordingly the international community had explicitly recognized their rights in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which reaffirmed rights already recognized under international law, stipulated what those rights meant for the disabled and clearly recalled the universal, indivisible, interdependent and indissociable nature of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The rapid entry into force of the Convention was encouraging and attested to the international community's awareness of the situation of the disabled. The effectiveness of the Convention would however depend on full implementation of its provisions.

54. **Mr. Maema** (Lesotho), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), stressed that internationally agreed development goals could only be realized through a continued focus on the special needs of the most vulnerable countries. In that context, he noted the importance of the recent high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals and high-level meeting on Africa's development needs and the high-level meeting of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

55. The global food and energy crises continued to have a negative effect on the international socio-economic situation and on the poor and vulnerable in particular. Accordingly, in April 2008 the SADC heads of State and Government had established a ministerial task force on food security to address the current crisis in the region and respond to such factors as weather, energy prices, reductions in world food stocks, the use of crops in biofuel production, which increased food consumption in developing countries commodity speculation and inadequate investment in agriculture. The task force had recommended that SADC countries should increase investment in agriculture and improve access to agricultural inputs by providing temporary subsidies to small farmers. It had also called on international donors and partners to honour their aid commitments to developing countries. He urged the

international community to assist SADC in tackling the challenges that it faced.

56. The World Summit for Social Development had reiterated the importance of full and productive employment for poverty reduction and development and he therefore noted with appreciation the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the high-level substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2006, which called for the development of a ten-year action plan to promote full and productive employment for all. Full and productive employment, including for women and young people, must be a central objective of national and international policies. SADC was committed to taking the necessary steps to implement that goal.

57. Poverty continued to be a scourge on humanity, and poverty eradication strategies must address its root causes and create an enabling environment for poverty eradication, equity and social development. Accordingly, in 2004 SADC had developed a regional indicative strategy development plan to create a conducive environment for economic growth and sustainable development and deepen integration within the region. Policies were being implemented to improve the lives of the poor, in particular in rural areas. Domestic and foreign resources were being mobilized for poverty eradication, and he called for increased official development assistance and foreign direct investment to that end. Notwithstanding progress made, poverty levels remained high, and the situation was aggravated by such health-related problems as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Increased access to low-cost or subsidized essential drugs and other life-saving interventions and the development of national capacities to produce generic medicines through technology transfer must be promoted.

58. He regretted that there had been only minimal progress in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Although older people, particularly in developing countries, bore the responsibility for caring for orphans and extended families due to the spread of HIV/AIDS, they were excluded from social development programmes. SADC remained committed to addressing the situation of older people by integrating them into poverty and development processes and allocating resources to that end. The international community must likewise take concerted action to implement the Madrid Plan of Action.

59. While progress had been made towards implementation of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade, international support for literacy remained low. Globally more than one adult in five was illiterate, 75 million children did not attend school and millions of children dropped out every year before acquiring sufficient skills to be productive. Increased literacy played a key role in reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. SADC remained committed to promoting universal access to quality education and the acquisition of skills needed for the knowledge-based economy and the health and social sectors as well as equal opportunity and sharing in the benefits of social development.

60. He welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and looked forward to its full implementation. International cooperation was essential to assist developing countries in that regard. He likewise noted with satisfaction the recommendations of the Inter-agency Support Group for the Convention as well as the work of the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development, in particular with regard to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

61. The Southern African Development Community continued to implement the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development, the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and related conferences. It reiterated its call for the developed countries to fulfil their commitments for official development assistance and debt relief, which were crucial for economic development.

62. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noted the sobering assessment in the World Economic and Social Survey 2008 that global economic security was under threat while the Secretary-General had spoken of a developmental emergency. That situation had been exacerbated by climate change and the increase in the power and frequency of tropical storms in the Caribbean, such as the two hurricanes that had devastated Haiti. It was therefore necessary to avoid further suffering by promoting aggressive medium- and long-term solutions to meet human needs and achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

63. She expressed support for the conclusions contained in the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/63/133) as well as the development priorities identified therein. She drew particular attention to the importance of reducing poverty and promoting social integration through the expansion of employment and job opportunities and to the need to make agricultural development a priority, especially given the impact of biofuels on the availability and cost of food. Also noteworthy were the recommendations to provide social protections to those in the informal economy and promote youth employment while likewise mainstreaming the concerns of older persons and the disabled into the development agenda.

64. She reiterated the continued relevance of General Assembly resolution 62/126 on policies and programmes involving youth: youth in the global economy-promoting youth participation in social and economic development, and the Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond contained therein. She commended the organizers of International Youth Day in August on the theme of youth and climate change, which was particularly relevant to youth in the Caribbean, and also commended the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for its recommendations on the unique problems of indigenous children and youth.

65. At the regional level, she commended the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Sub-Regional Headquarters for the Caribbean for its December 2007 report on the situation of youth in selected Caribbean countries. In July 2008, the CARICOM heads of Government had endorsed a framework for guiding and coordinating the actions of Governments and development partners in addressing children's issues, including with regard to climate change and emergency situations. They had also commended the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and development partners for their continued support.

66. The Caribbean Community commended the regional commissions for their contributions to the review of implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and welcomed the strategic implementation framework contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/95), looking forward to further dialogue on national and regional implementation. At the regional level she acknowledged the work of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters to identify demographic trends and the challenges that they posed for social protection and security, review national policies and analyse the situation of vulnerable groups, with a focus on the elderly.

67. In the context of the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, she noted the report of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters on disability in the Caribbean, which provided a basis for a dialogue on that issue. With regard to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, she reiterated CARICOM support for national, regional and international efforts to strengthen the family, in particular family reunification, especially for migrant workers, who made significant contributions to the development of their host countries.

68. Despite limited resources, CARICOM member States continued to address the challenges of social development at the national level and through regional institutions. That was especially challenging for small States, and she noted that the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) maintained a social policy unit to integrate economic and social strategy, collect data and support and monitor development activities. CARICOM looked forward to the results of efforts by the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in the period 2008-2009 to organize expert meetings on improving social statistics for measuring progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and identifying critical areas in the provision of social and economic programmes, in particular for vulnerable populations.

69. At the wider regional level, the Community continued to tackle social development issues. The Pan-Caribbean Partnership against AIDS was proving to be an effective mechanism to coordinate the efforts of Governments and civil society. The 2007 CARICOM Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases was another example of regional efforts to meet the health needs of the region. CARICOM heads of Government were also developing initiatives to deal with such issues as rising prices, energy, climate change and food and nutrition security, including support for agriculture. For the smaller member States, the heads of Government of the Eastern Caribbean, at their meeting in May 2008, had acknowledged the

critical need to increase food production and agreed to share experiences and practices to deal with the challenges facing the agriculture sector and mitigate their effects on the more vulnerable segments of the population.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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Summary record of the 2nd meeting
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Chairman: Ms. Seanedzu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Ghana)

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08-53600 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), Ms. Seanedzu (Ghana), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 55: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/63/133)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/63/183 and A/63/184)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/63/95)

(d) United Nations Literary Decade: Education for All (*continued*) (A/63/172)

(e) Review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (*continued*) (A/63/183)

1. **Ms. Rovirosa** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group attached the utmost importance to the question of full employment and decent work for all. She thanked the Secretary-General for his report (A/63/133), which included valuable recommendations for States, the international community and the United Nations system. She welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts towards mainstreaming the topic into all of the Organization's work. Despite positive economic indicators, growth in the Rio Group countries had not created enough decent jobs. Trade barriers, unfair trading practices, the global economic situation and the international trading system continued to have a negative impact. A firm political will would be needed in order to achieve full employment and decent work for all, an aim that should be placed at the core of the relevant strategies. The Rio Group countries had therefore established programmes and strategies promoting employment, social development and the protection of vulnerable groups.

2. Food security and the crisis resulting from the unprecedented rise in food prices were of the utmost concern. More than ever, priority must be given to the rural and agricultural sector, which accounted for a significant share of total employment in the Rio Group countries. The attainment of full employment and decent work for all, and in particular the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises, would require international cooperation in the form of developed countries' honouring of their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their GDP to official development assistance, South-South cooperation, technical cooperation and the exchange of good practices.

3. The Secretary-General's report stressed that women, indigenous peoples, young, ageing or disabled persons and migrant workers were often excluded from the job market and became the victims of discrimination. The recent adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should encourage the full and equal participation of persons in those categories. The Rio Group welcomed the fact that a majority of its members had already acceded to the Convention. However, many young persons in Latin America and the Caribbean could not find decent work. In order to remedy the situation, it was vital that they receive an education tailored to their needs. Moreover, development strategies needed to take into consideration the ageing of the population. Measures addressing the specific needs of youth and older persons would contribute directly to resolving the crisis affecting social security systems in many countries.

4. Discrimination against women in the workplace had a high social and economic cost. The countries of the Rio Group were aware that such segregation was unacceptable, and they remained determined to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. It was crucial to ensure that the rights of migrants were fully respected and that they enjoyed decent and safe working conditions, they contributed as much to their home countries as to their receiving countries.

5. The multi-dimensional nature of poverty required innovative and integrated strategies to assist all States in attaining the internationally agreed development goals, in particular the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), something that could be achieved only if the international community showed determination.

6. **Ms. Kreibich** (Germany) said that, as in previous years, her delegation was honoured to include two youth delegates, who would speak on behalf of young Germans.

7. **Ms. Schrader** (Germany) said that the youth delegates had travelled across their country to talk with young people, in schools and at conferences and other events, in order to understand their hopes, concerns and visions in the light of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Young people saw education as the decisive force in breaking out of poverty. They refused to accept unemployment, illiteracy and the waste of resources, and called upon Governments to increase their investments.

8. Education had been recognized as a human right by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Millennium Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, if efforts to promote it were not substantially increased, many countries would fail to ensure universal primary education, and only a few would achieve gender equality in primary and secondary education, the two Millennium Development Goals that had seen the least progress. The ability to educate youth would determine each country's contribution to the global community; each euro invested in education had a social return on investment of 120 per cent. Education should unlock one of the world's most powerful resources, whether they be young Europeans, whose numbers would shrink by 25 per cent by 2050, or young Africans, who would have the task of leading their countries out of conflict, poverty and hunger.

9. Young persons wished to see greater recognition of the value of non-formal education systems. In many developing countries, such systems represented the only access to education. Non-formal education providers, many of them youth organizations, should receive more than the limited support that they currently enjoyed.

10. **Mr. Klein** (Germany) said that over half of the world's population were less than 25 years old. Young persons wanted to be included in political decision-making. They wanted not only to be the subject of decisions but also to be key agents in their implementation. The status of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals was of great concern to young people. To see the Goals as a mere statement of good will would be one of the greatest possible mistakes. Young persons called upon all Governments to contribute to their realization.

11. Including youth in the political system at an early stage in their lives and in an age-appropriate manner would help nurture a sense of ownership and identification and, in the long term, help strengthen the legitimacy of political institutions. Around the world, young volunteers and youth organizations were already contributing greatly to social development through international student exchanges and peer-to-peer education programmes in Africa, and by tackling issues such as juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, racism and sexual health. Youth organizations should therefore receive greater administrative and financial support.

12. Young people also felt that taking an active part in society meant more than simply volunteering; they wanted to be fully able to shape the future of their communities. However, their participation could provide the maximum benefit only if they were fully informed of the rights and means at their disposal, if the mechanisms of participation were attractive to them and if the results were transparent.

13. In conclusion, young people called upon Member States to recognize the value of informal education by supporting youth organizations; ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child; promoting youth input in the planning, evaluation and implementation of decisions affecting them; and supporting youth participation at the United Nations by including young people in all Member State delegations.

14. **Ms. Kurosaki** (Japan) said that social development was a relatively new concept, the importance of which had been recognized by the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. At the Summit, there had been a comprehensive discussion of three priority areas: the eradication of poverty; support for full and productive employment; and the promotion of social integration, the latter being the priority theme of the Commission for Social Development for 2009-2010. Over 10 years after the Summit, social integration remained a challenge in many societies, owing to their poverty. Without the support of the international community, it might be difficult for the least developed countries to make advances in social integration. Japan had been active, at both national and international level, in contributing to the enhancement of social integration.

15. The promotion of a "society for all", in which every individual and group could participate, involved

also the promotion of a "society for all ages", guaranteeing the full integration of older people and their continued involvement in society. As a rapidly ageing society, in which 21.5 per cent of the population was over 65, Japan had taken measures to deal with the situation. For example, it had prohibited age limits on recruitment and established a stronger social welfare and health-care system to address the special needs of older people. It also sought to enhance the independence and social participation of people with disabilities by means of comprehensive measures implemented under the country's 10-year programmes since 1983. In September 2007, Japan had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Government was also promoting awareness of infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and leprosy, in order to eliminate prejudice and discrimination against people affected by those diseases.

16. Japan provided official development assistance (ODA) both bilaterally and through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, having regard to such social development issues as income disparity, gender discrimination, human rights, democratization and environmental considerations in each recipient country.

17. Her delegation would be submitting a draft resolution jointly with Brazil entitled "Follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers". She hoped that all States would become sponsors of the draft resolution.

18. **Ms. Maierá** (Brazil) said that her delegation fully associated itself with the views expressed by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group. It reaffirmed its support for the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Social Development and the subsequent special session of the General Assembly. Those commitments were particularly relevant at a time when a serious economic and financial crisis threatened the living conditions of all, especially those of the most vulnerable people.

19. Her Government was implementing social development policies that had served as a model for African and other South American countries. Since 2003, almost 10 million jobs had been created, nine million people had been brought out of poverty and another 20 million had moved up into the middle class. The "Bolsa Familia" programme provided grants for schooling and health care for children and retraining for adults, while other initiatives had been launched to increase school attendance and eradicate child malnutrition.

20. Brazil also supported all initiatives aimed at strengthening and developing the protection of everyone over 60. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/63/95) and, in particular, its recommendation that Member States should request him to submit a report to the General Assembly in 2009 specifically relating to the rights of older persons. In December 2007, Brazil had hosted the Second Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing, which had aimed to follow up, at regional level, the commitments of the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Conference had adopted the Brasilia Declaration, which had reaffirmed the participants' commitment to spare no effort in promoting and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all older persons, eradicating all forms of discrimination and violence against them and creating networks for their protection in order to ensure the effective exercise of their rights.

21. Lastly, with regard to volunteerism, the Government had been working with the United Nations Volunteers in the implementation of several projects, especially those aimed at the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. There were more volunteers in Brazil than in almost any other developing country. In view of the importance it had attached to the issue, her delegation would be submitting a draft resolution, jointly with the delegation of Japan, entitled "Follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers".

22. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The World Summit for Social Development had laid the foundations for a comprehensive examination of three basic issues, namely poverty reduction and eradication, the promotion of employment and the consolidation of social integration.

23. The Sudanese economy had grown very fast over recent years, thus benefiting Government programmes to combat poverty and assist vulnerable groups. A

national programme launched in 2001 made provision for free emergency hospital care, a reduction in school fees, financial assistance for students and infrastructure development. The State had also taken steps to promote youth employment.

24. To deal with the global food crisis, the Sudan had decided to make full use of the country's extensive agricultural resources and set up a programme in 2008 to boost the agriculture sector, by extending the acreage of land under cultivation and diversifying crops. Partnerships had also been formed with other countries.

25. The Sudan had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which had been adopted by the Council of Ministers and submitted to Parliament for ratification. The Minister of Social Welfare, Women and Children's Affairs had adopted measures to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Convention, and set up special programmes for older persons and youth, including programmes to promote their rights and their participation in society.

26. The Sudan's achievements in the field of social development still fell short of the goals set out at the World Conference for Social Development. It was therefore essential to enhance international coordination and cooperation, strengthen national capacities within the framework of productive partnerships and ensure increased development assistance from donor countries. Another priority must be the total elimination of foreign debt, which was a hindrance to development projects undertaken by the poor countries and undermined their stability.

27. **Ms. Halpern** (United States of America) noted with satisfaction the cautious optimism expressed by the Director-General of UNESCO in his report on the implementation of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade transmitted by the Secretary-General (A/63/172) with regard to the progress made in youth and adult literacy rates. According to the latest figures, the world literacy rate among those aged between 15 and 24 had risen from 87 per cent to 89 per cent in the past decade. The report also noted, however, that there were still 774 million non-literate young people and adults in the world, the majority of whom were women. Much remained to be done. Her delegation urged UNESCO to encourage other multilateral organizations to make a greater commitment to the promotion of literacy and to define more clearly the important link between literacy and other areas of development, such as health and employment. It also challenged UNESCO to measure the effects of those links in order to help the international community take stronger action to eradicate illiteracy.

28. Much had been done for literacy by the First Lady of the United States, Laura Bush. As Honorary Ambassador to the United Nations Literacy Decade, she had recently announced the establishment of the United Nations Literacy Decade Fund to Advance Global Literacy, which would support literacy efforts, assessment and best practices in the countries targeted by the UNESCO Literacy Initiative for Empowerment, 2005-2015. The Fund would be sustained by contributions from foundations, corporations and Governments, beginning with the United States, which would contribute US$ 2 million. Helping the hundreds of millions of illiterate men and women learn to read was a moral obligation and one of the greatest challenges of the age.

29. **Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh) said that her country associated itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Referring to some of the important issues for the least developed countries and citing the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/133), she expressed disappointment that, in most countries, economic growth remained insufficient to create decent jobs while, in others, higher growth rates had not translated into the generation of better and more productive jobs, especially for the poor; moreover, trade barriers and unfair trading practices hindered job creation in developing countries. The least developed countries needed adequate assistance and special treatment to be able to generate more employment opportunities at home and abroad. It was therefore encouraging that the United Nations system and the international financial institutions were placing more emphasis on employment issues.

30. Bangladesh remained fully committed to the objectives defined at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those relating to full and productive employment. With regard to social development, it had joined the ranks of medium human development countries on the Human Development Index. Bangladesh had also become a party to the Convention

on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, and its provisions were fully reflected in all the country's policies and activities, as demonstrated particularly by the adoption of the Disability Welfare Rules in 2008, the establishment of a quota in all Government jobs for people with disabilities, and the introduction of microcredit programmes.

31. Unemployment among young people was a matter of major concern, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/133), and in order to integrate young people into community development and socio-economic activities, her Government had adopted a national youth policy and other programmes targeting employment; moreover, cash-for-education programmes had increased school enrolment and attendance. Bangladesh needed to join the Youth Employment Network and to share the best practices of the lead countries to develop and implement strategies to help young people find decent and productive work.

32. Keeping older people in the labour force according to their capacities and preference required dynamic policies. Bangladesh ensured protection for the fundamental freedoms, human rights and welfare of its elderly population of five million and had introduced pension and micro-loan schemes, in line with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It was also conducting awareness-raising campaigns on the situation of older persons, had supported all United Nations initiatives concerning the family and had taken innovative measures aimed, in particular, at the poor and at rural women who often provided the only financial support for their family.

33. The poor had been the hardest hit by the current global food crisis, and it was imperative to increase agricultural productivity, promote agricultural development and invest more in research and technology transfer. To attenuate the effects of the crisis, the expansion of basic social protection should be made an integral part of development plans and poverty reduction strategies in developing countries, and the goal of full and decent employment should be made the central objective of macroeconomic planning and reforms. The free movement of labour was also essential to the development of many of the least developed countries and her delegation hoped that the necessary political will would converge with an effective partnership between national efforts and international material support.

34. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that her delegation associated itself with the statements made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group; it also shared the opinion expressed in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/133) that, to reduce poverty and promote social integration, it was critical to focus on expanding employment and decent work opportunities.

35. Colombia accorded a fundamental importance in its development programmes to building a society that was more equitable and open for all. Job creation and economic recovery measures played an essential role in its actions. Among other encouraging results of the economic policy, the unemployment rate had decreased from 20 per cent in 2000 to 11.2 per cent in 2008, the minimum salary had increased by 8 per cent in five years and exceeded the rate of inflation, gross domestic product (GDP) had grown by 6.8 per cent in 2006 and the proportion of those living in poverty had declined from 56 per cent in 2002 to 45 per cent in 2006. To combat poverty and inequality more effectively, her Government had created mechanisms to facilitate the access of the poorest and most vulnerable groups to goods and services that would satisfy their most basic needs and generate sustainable income, and actions had been taken in favour of young people, women, the disabled, and displaced and demobilized persons.

36. Her Government had increased the number of workers covered by social security by 40 per cent and, by the end of 2006, almost 38 million Colombians had health insurance, funded by the State in more than half the cases; the goal was to expand social service coverage to the whole population by 2010. Her Government had also launched a microcredit programme, which had made 1.9 million loans to poor families and small and medium-sized enterprises in 2007, and in 2006 the State had financed 4.1 million study grants in the context of human resource development.

37. Development was not only synonymous with accelerated economic growth, but also involved the equitable distribution of wealth. Nevertheless, the growth of the global economy had not created better or more productive jobs for the poorest. The United Nations system should undertake coherent actions to promote national policies and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; international cooperation was an essential factor in that regard.

38. **Mr. Amorós Nuñez** (Cuba) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and recalled the commitments made by world leaders at the World Summit for Social Development. His delegation was disappointed to observe that its pessimism at the time was justified; nowadays injustice and inequality were more prevalent throughout the world than in 1995. The commitments made at the Summit would never be fulfilled, because egoism, injustice and the hegemonic pretensions, inequalities, waste and consumerism of an affluent minority continued to expand. Currently, 1.4 billion people lived on less than one dollar a day, 925 million people suffered from hunger and the global food crisis was only worsening the situation. Without political will, the situation would not change, and 80 per cent of the global population would remain excluded.

39. Regarding the commitment to achieve the goal of full employment, his delegation regretted that, owing to the inequitable international circumstances imposed by the most powerful countries, more than 1.5 billion of the global population of working age were unemployed or underemployed, most of them in the developing countries; 80 per cent of the world's population did not have adequate social protection and 50 per cent had none at all. To end that situation, wealthy countries should honour their commitments concerning official development assistance, and developing countries should not be held back by their external debt burden.

40. Regretting the failure of the Doha Round, his delegation considered that there could be no progress while powerful countries spent more than US$ 250 billion on agricultural subsidies, thereby squandering US$ 3 a day on their cattle, while more than one sixth of humanity survived on less than a dollar a day. Those who defended neoliberalism at all costs were currently promoting ambitious Government interventions in their financial systems even though, in the past, they had dissuaded developing countries from following such a policy.

41. The embargo imposed by the United States of America on Cuba was the principal obstacle to its development and had been maintained despite the two hurricanes that had devastated the country. Cuba had made progress in terms of social development, and the whole population had access to health services and free education; life expectancy was more than 77 years of age, and school enrolment was 100 per cent at the primary level and 99 per cent at the secondary level. More than two thirds of the national budget was invested in areas such as education, health, social security and benefits and scientific research. Moreover, in the context of international cooperation, more than 270,000 Cubans had taken part in social development activities in 154 countries since 1961, and the Cuban study grant programme for students from developing countries had enabled 23,000 foreigners to study medicine in Cuba. Lastly, he said it was necessary to put an end to egoism and empty promises in order to create a world that was more equitable and better for all.

42. **Ms. Banna** (Iraq) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and recalled the importance of social development. Iraq was attempting to ensure the same rights to all its citizens and to take collective measures to re-establish stable development, which had been undermined by constant conflicts and economic sanctions. Security problems, associated with the high unemployment rate and the brain drain, had adversely affected development programmes, and the whole international community, rather than Iraq itself, bore the responsibility.

43. Nonetheless, her Government was making a considerable effort to reduce poverty, especially by offering more jobs and increasing salaries in the public sector. Projects had been launched to help the poor, the disabled and the elderly, and to boost the agricultural sector. The health sector had also received significant attention, as indicated by the creation of 300 health centres and the rebuilding of 37 hospitals. The Government saw education as a priority: it had increased the budget for education and training by 5 per cent and had already built 700 of the 4,000 schools projected to be completed by the end of 2008. The literacy rate of the 15 to 24 age group had risen despite the very difficult economic and social situation. Her Government had made an effort to boost oil exports to 3.5 million barrels a day to increase its domestic income, as reflected in the current budget. Inflation had been reduced to 24 per cent in 2003 and 16 per cent in 2007, and that policy had led to the adoption of the highest budget in the country's history: US$ 47 billion.

44. Iraq counted on the unreserved support of the international community, the United Nations and other

international organizations, in the context of the international pact for Iraq, to allow it to recover its place in the region and in the world.

45. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. For the second consecutive year, the focus was on full employment and decent work for all, yet international indicators showed that, despite an increase of 3.8 per cent in global GDP, unemployment had increased sharply, particularly in developing countries, where 89 per cent of the world's labour force lived, and in Africa, which had the highest unemployment rates. Those figures might double under the impact of the financial crises gripping the world, which made it particularly urgent to establish comprehensive strategies, not only to assess the job losses caused by the financial crisis and the global food, energy and climate crises, but also to respond rapidly at the national and international levels.

46. At the international level, the failure of the Doha round of trade negotiations must be addressed, firstly by increasing foreign direct investment, streamlining tax policies, developing labour markets and adopting policies on migration, and secondly by promoting cooperation, in particular official development assistance. He welcomed, in that connection, the convening of the two high-level meetings on Africa's development needs and the Millennium Development Goals.

47. At the national level, social welfare systems must be strengthened to protect ordinary citizens from the effects — especially transboundary effects — of the crisis. That called for development policies that would increase production, empower youth and, in a comprehensive manner, increase their capabilities as human resources through strong health care and social systems.

48. His Government had made efforts to alleviate unemployment through policies on education and training. It had accomplished much with regard to gender equality and support for small businesses and partnerships between the public and private sectors, as part of an ambitious plan of political, economic and social reform, and would continue those efforts with the help of the international community.

49. The Secretary-General should assess the early impacts of the current crisis on social development, with special emphasis on the goal of full employment and decent work for all, and should provide recommendations to be presented at the next session of the Commission for Social Development .

50. **Mr. Rachkov** (Belarus) said that social development, one of the pillars of United Nations activity, had become especially important in the light of the current crisis. Belarus was improving its population's standard of living and was vigorously combating poverty: in 2007, the number of disadvantaged persons had decreased from 11.1 per cent to 7.7 per cent and the ratio between the highest and lowest salaries was only 6 to 1. Raising the employment rate was a key element of social development. Belarus had one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe, at less than 1 per cent. The most vulnerable groups (large families, young people, the disabled and the unemployed) were protected, and substantial social welfare assistance was available.

51. Pensioners currently made up 26 per cent of the population, while 11 per cent of GDP was expended on pension benefits. His Government had therefore decided to increase retirement benefits and to protect pension payments to citizens living in neighbouring countries. It had also built a solid network of health-care institutions and homes for the elderly and disabled, and spent 6 per cent of GDP on education. Urban and rural youth had equal access to education and paid no fees for secondary or post-secondary studies.

52. His Government hoped that the United Nations would increase its social development capacities by enhancing the role of the Economic and Social Council, which coordinated the implementation of United Nations decisions in that area.

53. **Mr. Alhabib** (Iran) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Noting that the goals established at the World Summit for Social Development had not been attained, he said that inequalities had increased in many parts of the world and that young people faced a difficult future.

54. In view of the figures on unemployment and underemployment worldwide, efforts to generate full employment and decent work must transcend national policies. Their success would depend on the promotion

of a macroeconomic environment in which integrated, coherent policies were implemented. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/133), achieving the goal of decent work for all would require closer international cooperation, through debt relief and official development assistance, and greater coherence in trade, aid, economic and social policies.

55. His country was committed to achieving the goals set at the World Summit: it had developed policies to promote social development and had taken concrete action in the areas of health, social security, employment, education and poverty reduction in the hope of creating a better life for current and future generations.

56. **Ms. Berrah** (Algeria) said that her delegation agreed with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Emphasizing that, in order to achieve social development, the vicious cycle of unemployment and poverty must be broken, and that decent work was the key to doing so, she said that her Government had made job creation a priority and had taken measures to upgrade skills, create small and medium-sized businesses, and promote equality of job opportunities.

57. The efforts being made by Algeria and many other developing countries could not succeed without active international solidarity and sincere partnership between developed and developing countries, and her Government reiterated its dedication to the Copenhagen commitments and to the Millennium Development Goals.

58. **Mr. Phaovibul** (Thailand), representing the young people of Thailand, reported that as a result of the adoption of the Fifth National Youth Plan and the Long-Term Strategy (2002-2011) in accordance with the United Nations action plan to create a world fit for children, major progress had been made on improving the access of both boys and girls to primary and secondary education. Thailand thus hoped to fulfil the goals relating to education for all by 2015. Thailand was also striving to instil in its young people an awareness of the need to protect the environment and natural resources, to avoid waste and to make appropriate use of knowledge and technology. To that end his Government was carrying out various activities, notably in collaboration with UNESCO, to make young people aware of the problems of global warming and its effects on society.

59. **Ms. Ma** (Thailand), also speaking on behalf of the youth of her country, reported that after including representatives of the National Youth Council as members of the National Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Thai authorities had presented a report that took into account the real situation and needs of children. She encouraged other Member States to do likewise. Thailand also intended to apply the Durban Programme of Action, protect the rights of all persons belonging to different faiths and religions and encourage tolerance and non-discrimination, for example by organizing interfaith youth camps.

60. Member States must establish strong policies in favour of young people, in order to offer them sound views in a world of unprecedented possibilities and risks.

61. **Mr. Davide** (Philippines) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and that he wished to speak on agenda items 55 (b) and (e). Ten per cent of the world's population were disabled, and 80 per cent of them lived in the developing world. His Government was very committed at the national level, to improving the lives of persons with disabilities and to providing them with equal opportunities to become active and productive members of society. After briefly describing the legal framework guaranteeing the protection of persons with disabilities, together with the related work of the National Council on Disability Affairs, he said that the Philippines was a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and that the implementation of that instrument, together with the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, was essential to improving the lives of persons with disabilities, especially in the developing countries.

62. Despite the international community's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, which were reviewed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/183), his delegation was concerned that strategies being applied to that end might not have much impact on persons with disabilities, since they were the least likely to benefit from conventional development plans and policies. A conscious effort must be made to mainstream the issue of persons with disabilities in MDG strategies. Cooperation among all nations in the development field and the sharing of

knowledge and technologies needed to be strengthened. The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons was an important tool in the international disability architecture, helping to improve the situation of a large segment of society whose development and inclusion would lead to positive gains for humankind as a whole.

63. **Mr. Bui The Giang** (Viet Nam) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Viet Nam's socio-economic development strategy, designed in collaboration with many international partners, in particular United Nations agencies, comprised 12 national goals based on the Millennium Development Goals. Concrete policies put in place for the benefit of vulnerable groups had resulted in sustained economic growth, a sharp decrease in poverty, a reduction in maternal and child mortality, an enhanced role for women in the employment market and in decision-making and broader participation of ethnic minorities in society.

64. In close cooperation with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and many other donors, Viet Nam was working to guarantee education for all, on the basis of a national strategy aimed at reforming curricula and teaching methods, recruiting qualified teachers, building new schools, promoting international cooperation, and more. Between 2001 and 2007, the education portion of total national expenditures had increased by an average of 21.3 per cent per annum, while national budget revenues had grown by only 14.8 per cent in the same period. Preschool enrolment had increased by 24 per cent between 2000 and 2006; the enrolment rates were some 96 per cent for lower secondary education and 73.6 per cent for upper secondary education; and the adult literacy rate had reached 94 per cent in 2007. Also, Viet Nam's Human Development Index was relatively high as compared to its per capita GDP.

65. Equity was an essential component of the national education policy. As a result, 86,000 students from ethnic minorities were currently enrolled in 280 boarding schools. A project intended to provide access to primary education for disadvantaged children, under way since 2003 in cooperation with the World Bank and other donors, had resulted in an unprecedented increase in the school completion rate among disadvantaged children, especially in the most vulnerable groups, and in access to schooling for more than 90 per cent of children with disabilities. It was time to move on from education for all to quality education for all.

66. **Mr. Rahman** (Malaysia), making reference to the food security and financial crisis, said that the time had come to redouble efforts to ensure observance of the principles laid down at the World Summit for Social Development, especially with regard to international cooperation and the transfer of technology and expertise, as well as to strive for fulfilment of the agreed targets for official development assistance. Additionally, the international financial and economic sectors had to be reformed to ensure that they were fair and equitable and allowed for a satisfactory balance between the roles of the public and private sectors, respectively, by adopting regulations and market-driven approaches. It was also essential to avoid ambiguities in the language of General Assembly resolutions focused on vulnerable groups and to show determination and sincerity in that regard. The international community could not wait for the full effects of the current financial, food and fuel crises to come to bear before taking action. His delegation called on the relevant entities of the United Nations system to provide Member States with a preliminary assessment of the impact of the crises.

67. Turning to the youth question, he said that Malaysia's National Youth Development Policy, formulated in 1985 and revised in 1997, focused on major areas such as employment, human resource development, empowerment and enterprise development. The Youth Development Act of 2007, which concentrated on education, research and human resources, had led to the establishment of the National Youth Consultative Council and the Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development.

68. On the issue of ageing, he said that older persons constituted 4.3 per cent of the total population in 2005, a proportion that was expected to grow to 9.8 per cent by 2020. Although it was less affected than some developed countries, Malaysia was aware of the socio-economic implications of population ageing and in 1995 had drawn up a National Policy for the Elderly, based on the United Nations Principles for Older Persons; that policy had been followed, in 1998, by an action plan based on a multidisciplinary approach that encouraged the elderly to remain independent and active. The Government had also established a National Advisory and Consultative Council for the

Elderly consisting of representatives from Government agencies, NGOs and prominent individuals. Similar steps had also been taken for disabled persons. On 8 April 2008, Malaysia had become a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and intended to ratify the Convention as soon as the necessary administrative and legislative procedures had been completed.

69. Malaysia stood ready to share its experience on the matter with the relevant bodies of the United Nations system and the Member States.

70. **Mr. Alakhder** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Poverty, illiteracy and disease were the main obstacles to social development, particularly in Africa, where the rate of youth unemployment and the rates of maternal and infant mortality were increasing because of epidemics, famine and extreme poverty. In that context, his delegation called on the international community, financial institutions and donors to honour the commitments entered into at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in the Millennium Declaration and at the end of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

71. Since the 1970s, his country had put in place social development programmes and projects focused on young people, who were key to development. The participants in the National Youth Forum, held in 2007, had adopted several recommendations aimed at encouraging the participation of young people in political life and decision-making and at creating jobs for young men and women, in particular through small and medium-sized enterprises.

72. In Africa, a project for combating poverty, unemployment and disease had been launched in 2006 in order to encourage investment in the youth employment sector. His Government was also funding various projects aimed at promoting development in Africa and was providing food and medicine to the victims of disasters. It was also financing programmes designed to achieve the objectives established at the World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid, as well as shelters for the elderly and the homeless.

73. His country had become a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 and supported United Nations efforts to relaunch the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

74. **Ms. Zhang** Dan (China) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. While welcoming the considerable progress made in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, she noted the persistence of imbalances among different regions. Most countries lacked the resources to collect data and conduct the research necessary, and her delegation called on all countries to intensify their efforts and invest more financial and human resources in such work.

75. Around the world, 700 million adults, two thirds of whom were women, were illiterate and more than 70 million children did not receive school education. China welcomed the activities of UNESCO relating to the United Nations Literacy Decade and appealed to all Governments to coordinate their efforts in that regard. Conscious of the role it had to play as the world's most populous country, China had promulgated a national law in 1986 making it compulsory to receive nine years of education. Her Government had set up an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism to combat illiteracy, while local governments had established their own institutions, and mechanisms for accountability, inspection and verification had also been established at the national and local levels. Children from vulnerable families received free textbooks and monthly stipends. Thanks to 22 years of effort, China was guaranteeing its population free access to high-quality education. The next step was to improve the level of literacy among women and ethnic minorities in order to halve illiteracy by 2015.

76. China welcomed the entry into force on 3 May 2008 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it had ratified on 26 June 2008. Nonetheless, Governments should raise public awareness of the rights of the 650 million persons with disabilities throughout the world, who continued to face various problems relating to social security, education, employment and integration. The Paralympic Games in Beijing, which had brought together more than 4,000 athletes representing 146 countries, had played a crucial role in that regard, and had also prompted large-scale renovation of public transport facilities, tourist sites and shopping centres in Beijing in order to facilitate access for the disabled and

to create employment relating to that sector of the population. Disabled people had thus been able to reassert their dignity and self-confidence.

77. **Mr. Hojem** (Norway), speaking as the youth representative of Norway, said that children and young people living in conflict zones were a particularly vulnerable and unprotected group, for whom education, which was a basic right, could provide a framework of security and stability. However, in conflict situations, schools closed down, young people were recruited to the army or militias, and many were forced to flee their homes. Humanitarian aid was often limited to providing food, medicine and shelter for refugees and displaced persons. Universal access to quality primary education was an essential goal, but secondary education must also be supported. It was vital to train teachers, health professionals and engineers in order to ensure post-conflict reconstruction and recovery, but it was regrettable that education was sometimes used as a pretext for teaching intolerance, racism and xenophobia.

78. Although Governments were increasingly aware of the central role of education in crisis situations, they were reluctant to allocate funds to education as part of humanitarian aid. Education programmes were therefore often underfunded or non-existent. Norway urged all Member States to fulfil their commitments, in particular those set out in the Millennium Development Goals and the UNESCO Education for All initiative, and to increase funding for children and young people in conflict zones. Education programmes for young people in conflict situations should meet international minimum standards such as those established by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, and girls should enjoy the same opportunities as boys throughout their education. Norway therefore urged all Member States to include young people as participants in post-conflict political and economic processes.

79. **Ms. Ranki** (Finland), speaking as a youth representative of her country, said that Finland associated itself with the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union. Young people were important to society, which should ensure their growth into responsible citizenship and adulthood while recognizing their role in world development and their right of access to joint resources. Affected as they were by unemployment, poverty, environmental problems and such diseases as HIV/AIDS, young people were one of the most marginalized groups and everyone's responsibility.

80. Being young was a rewarding time of life, but it could also be hard, particularly for girls, who were victims of violence and discrimination. Governments must therefore cooperate at the international level in protecting girls and young women from all forms of violence, and every Member State should adopt a national action programme to combat domestic violence. Men should have a role in such initiatives and, while offenders should be held accountable, efforts should also be made to develop positive male role models.

81. Every year, five million women between the ages of 15 and 19 had abortions, 40 per cent of them in unsafe conditions. They were generally ill-informed about HIV/AIDS-related issues, although the best way of preventing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases was the dissemination of proper information and the provision of social services.

82. Universal and equal access to primary education was of the utmost importance for development, and yet 65 million girls still remained out of school. Girls must also have access to all employment opportunities and should be encouraged to participate in traditionally male-dominated sectors, while men should be urged to assume greater responsibility in the home.

83. To overcome stereotypes and discrimination, support should be given to the efforts of Governments and international and non-governmental organizations, particularly youth organizations, to promote the equality and participation of girls in society, for human rights applied to all persons equally. Women represented half the world population; without gender parity, the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond could not be achieved.

84. **Mr. Rey** (Switzerland) said that, in the current context of globalization, the employment and education of young people had a crucial part to play in ensuring the stability of society. Since, for some years, there had been no significant drop in youth unemployment worldwide, it was a matter of urgency to take steps to address that scourge, which cost young people, their parents and their country dearly. Moreover, young people without work were easy prey for all kinds of extremism; they could thereby be led to disrupt social peace, which was the key to prosperity.

All Member States should take the measures set out in the World Programme of Action. While there was low unemployment in Switzerland, efforts still needed to be made in that connection, in particular to reduce the number of unemployed in the immigrant population.

85. One of the solutions to unemployment hinged on education, which had to be made accessible to everyone and not just to a happy few, as was the case in some countries. Providing education for the future generation was a means of ensuring a country's prosperity, the security of the older generation and a better life for everyone. All young people should therefore benefit from it, without discrimination, as was required by an egalitarian, free and democratic society. Swiss youth, like young people the world over, fervently wished to be part of the solution and not part of the problem, and Switzerland had put measures in place to encourage them to embark on professional life, for example through internships, and had introduced a scholarship scheme and language courses for immigrant children.

86. Intergenerational dialogue was essential for constructive, egalitarian decision-making and for determining the needs of young people and of society. It was regrettable that there were so few youth representatives at the current session, as compared with 2005. Fresh efforts must be made, by young people and Member States alike; his delegation encouraged them to give the best of themselves, for the sake of today's generation and that of tomorrow.

87. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) reaffirmed his country's attachment to the Copenhagen Programme of Action and to the international development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Stability, security and justice were sine qua non conditions for social equality. Like other countries, Lebanon was seeking to ensure the social and economic integration of young people, women, disabled persons and the elderly through assistance and development programmes, but notwithstanding its sustained efforts, the objectives set at the Copenhagen Summit were still far from being achieved.

88. International cooperation, based on partnerships with donor countries, was essential. However, the gap was widening between rich and poor, between developed countries and developing countries, and the fruits of economic development were not enjoyed by those most in need. Employment played a crucial role in poverty eradication and in social integration and stability. A remedy must therefore be found to such problems as foreign debt, the deterioration of education and the decline in productivity, in the knowledge that economic growth alone could not ensure the attainment of the goals set. Financial assistance from developed countries was therefore essential.

89. Globalization had led to some economic growth, which did not however benefit all developing countries. Efforts had to be made to create conditions conducive to social development, eliminate factors of instability and put an end to blockade policies, in particular. Israel's occupation of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian Arab territories impeded the efforts of the populations concerned to achieve development and dignity, for their right to development and to decent work was being ignored.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

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Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 7 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Majoor ..... (Netherlands)
later: Mr. Peralta (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Paraguay)
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08-53812 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

Agenda item 55: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/63/133)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/63/183 and A/63/184)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/63/95)

(d) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*) (A/63/172)

(e) Review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (*continued*) (A/63/183)

1. **Mr. Zelenev** (Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)), in response to a question from the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic the previous day regarding the activities of the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development relating to war and conflict situations and persons with disabilities, said that the Special Rapporteur had an independent office situated in Doha, Qatar, which published material relating to his work. Those documents, including those dealing with war and conflict situations and persons with disabilities, could be obtained directly from that office. Contact details for the office were available from the Secretariat.

2. **Mr. Chabar** (Morocco) said that there could be no excuse for failing to promote full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, productive and decent work for all and poverty eradication, yet 60 years after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights financial turmoil, high unemployment, the informal economy and the lack of social protection had increased uncertainty in labour markets. It was therefore all the more urgent to make job creation and stability a priority. He expressed concern, however, at the effect of increasingly unpredictable consequences of globalization on the developing countries and the goal of full employment and wondered whether full employment meant one thing in the developed countries and another in the developing countries.

3. He welcomed the adoption by the International Labour Conference at its 97th session of a Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization with a view to promoting fair globalization through decent work. That principle would guide his Government in its firm commitment to the realization of the Copenhagen commitments and the Millennium Development Goals. Sharing of experience and strengthened international cooperation, in particular with regard to debt relief and official development assistance (ODA), would accelerate the achievement of those goals. The international community must show the political will to develop an aggressive and innovative strategy to promote full productive employment and social cohesion and mitigate the effects of the international economic system on employment.

4. He welcomed the prominence given in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/133) to the need to invest in agriculture and enterprise development, in particular farms and rural enterprises. His Government, through the Green Morocco Plan, was promoting rural and agricultural development and increased productivity. An agricultural development agency would be established to implement the Plan, which would create tens of thousands of jobs and make agriculture the driving force of the national economy.

5. His Government had incorporated international human rights standards into a social development strategy that made the individual the cornerstone of public development policy. It had launched a National Human Development Initiative in 2005 aimed at promoting human dignity by reducing poverty and unemployment, promoting the rights of women and children, increasing the access of the disadvantaged to basic services and strengthening social protection mechanisms, in particular by reducing exclusion, increasing education rates and reforming the social system in both rural and urban areas.

6. The Initiative was aimed at helping individuals acquire the skills to enter local labour markets and manage small and medium enterprises. Numerous measures had been adopted in the areas of training and education to help the unemployed, including persons with disabilities, obtain employment. Vocational training centres and social resource offices had been

established throughout the country to provide training to disadvantaged girls, lower girls' school dropout rates, meet the educational needs of poor rural girls.

7. Furthermore, tens of thousands of micro-credit schemes had facilitated the creation of revenue-generating activities, providing decent working conditions to many citizens and their families. Counselling services were available to assist the young and disadvantaged and promote local-level projects for unskilled workers. Such efforts were in keeping with his Government's commitment to building a modern society based on a human rights-based development policy and to cooperating with international partners to ensure sustainable economic development and full and productive employment for all.

8. **Mr. Thiebou** (Netherlands) recalled that Eleanor Roosevelt had highlighted the need to give more attention to the problems of youth but 70 years later, and 60 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, despite progress made, many challenges remained. For example, he expressed disappointment that, although half of the world's population was under 25 and in spite of the reaffirmation by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/126 of the importance of youth participation in decision-making, less than 10 per cent of Member States had been able to send a youth delegate to the current session of the General Assembly.

9. It was urgent to allow youth to give a voice to their generation and influence public policy to help those in need. Investing in and focusing on young people and enlisting their help was perhaps the most effective way of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) because young people best understood their own problems and would have to deal with the consequences of current decisions and find solutions in the future for a better world. Wherever and whenever decisions were taken that affected youth they must be involved.

10. Good health was a prerequisite for young people's participation, yet nearly a billion people had no access to drinking water, and two and a half billion people had no access to proper sanitary facilities. That was a human tragedy for children and young people, more of whom died from the effects of contaminated water than from AIDS or armed conflict. In developing countries, 80 per cent of diseases that affected young people were water-related. Many of them, in particular girls, did not attend school or dropped out because of poor sanitary facilities.

11. Although the technical and financial means to end the water and sanitation crisis existed, many parts of the world still lacked action plans to promote access to water and sanitation. Young people should be involved in designing water and sanitation schemes, for example for schools, and should be encouraged to act as peer educators to teach the importance of hygiene. All young people had the right to good health and human dignity, which implied access to clean water and sanitation. In that context, he welcomed the recognition by the Netherlands of the right to water and sanitation as a human right. Lastly, he stressed that young people did not want promises, good intentions and resolutions; they wanted real solutions and actions. Their thirst for participation could only be quenched by concrete measures aimed at involving them in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and implementing General Assembly resolution 62/126 and by including them in delegations and decision-making at all levels.

12. **Mr. Rakovsky** (Russian Federation) said that the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, and also the goals formulated as a result of the Millennium Declaration, remained important guidelines for States in their social policies.

13. A constructive dialogue in the Commission for Social Development would surely be of interest for all groups of States and offered the best opportunity for working out an effective policy on key social development issues. The Commission continued to play an important role as the main coordinator of international cooperation on issues of ageing, youth, equal opportunities for the disabled and strengthening the role of the family. He welcomed the Human Rights Council's adoption of the draft optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Unfortunately, the text remained contradictory in parts, as it took into account the opinions of as many States parties as possible.

14. His Government was implementing large-scale projects to improve the demographic situation and solve social problems as part of its long-term social

and economic development plan for the period up to 2020. The national economy could be made more effective, sustainable and innovative only by developing the human factor through large-scale investment in health and education, and by ensuring safe and decent living conditions. Within 10 or 15 years, the Russian Federation expected to join the leading countries on key social indicators such as income, social protection, education, health, life expectancy, environmental health and housing.

15. The social and moral health of society had an impact on children, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities and the family. Government youth policy was based on the priorities of a global programme of action. The federal agency for youth issues had the task of creating employment opportunities and healthy living conditions for young people and encouraging them to share the ideals of peace and mutual understanding. Ageing was a demographic reality in the Russian Federation: older persons accounted for 20 per cent of the country's citizens, and would account for 25 per cent by 2016. They were provided with assistance on the basis of strategies elaborated at the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the provisions of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The mechanism for increasing pensions and a programme to provide social protection and access to health for older persons were intended to ensure a dignified old age.

16. In the context of the treaty event held in New York in conjunction with the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Russian Federation had recently signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. His country paid close attention to improving the living conditions of persons with disabilities and to their rehabilitation and integration into society. There were 12 million persons with disabilities in the Russian Federation. Under a federal social assistance programme for persons with disabilities for 2006-2010, modern technology was being installed in health institutions to ensure their access to housing, social protection and transport, education and employment.

17. In the Russian Federation, 2008 had been declared the Year of the Family on the initiative of the President. State structures, political and social institutions, and businesses, religious organizations and the mass media were all taking part to support the family as the main embodiment of social and moral values. Sustainable development was a global task that required pooled efforts and capacities both within States and in the context of the entire international community if they were to make genuine progress in overcoming the obstacles on the path to social progress.

18. **Mr. Al-Shami** (Yemen) said that employment and decent work were a priority for his country. The third Five-Year Social and Economic Development Plan, covering the period 2006-2010, focused on encouraging economic growth and investment on the one hand, and developing a comprehensive approach to tackle unemployment and poverty on the other hand. Legislation had been passed to remedy gaps in the labour regime and improve wages. A national strategy was creating work in small and medium enterprises.

19. Yemen had taken part in the consultations that led to the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had been among the first States to sign it together with the Optional Protocol. The Convention was now being discussed in Parliament with a view to ratification. Yemen had taken action on a domestic level by passing legislation, establishing relevant organizations and working to draft a national strategy; 5 per cent of employment positions were now reserved for disabled persons.

20. The Islamic faith strongly encouraged care for older persons, who accounted for 3.45 per cent of Yemen's population. The first Government report on older persons had been issued in June 2007. The Government had hosted the first Arab regional conference on older persons in November 2007 and was now seeking to ensure comprehensive social care. However, the food and financial crises were hindering progress in developing countries such as Yemen. Intense efforts would be needed to confront these new challenges.

21. **Mr. Al-Allaf** (Jordan) said that his country saw education as a fundamental human right and the cornerstone of all human development policies. Some 12 per cent of the Government budget was allocated to education. Jordan was working to bridge the gender divide in that field; 98 per cent of girls now completed primary and secondary schools. One important initiative was the National Education Strategy, which was elaborated in 2006 and was supported by the Canadian International Development Agency, the United States Agency for International Development

and the Supporting Jordan's Education Reform Project. Also of note was the National Strategic Plan for 2008-2010, which followed parameters recommended by the World Bank.

22. The country was also working to improve the skills and living standards of teachers, in particular by contributing to a teachers' housing fund and establishing prizes for excellence in that field. Another programme sought to improve school meals, and was being extended to schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

23. Jordan was, moreover, a model of how public-private partnerships could be used to benefit education and ensure that it met the needs of the labour market. Yet despite its significant achievements, the country faced difficulties such as lack of funds and the need to develop its infrastructure. Nevertheless, it expected to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) within the agreed time frame.

24. **Mr. Muburi-Muita** (Kenya) said that his Government had undertaken reforms to improve economic performance and improve the lives of its citizens, for example by increasing access to education for youth and children and improving health care, in particular preventive care. Numerous problems nevertheless remained, such as high unemployment and low agricultural productivity, both of which exacerbated poverty and hunger. Poor agricultural performance was attributable in part to high production costs and low levels of technology. As a result of such problems, a high proportion of the population lived below the poverty line. Failure to address the current international energy, food and financial crises would increase poverty levels, affect social programmes and put at risk the modest gains in social development made to date.

25. That situation made it even more important to promote full employment and decent work for all. In Kenya, youth unemployment in particular was high, and many young people migrated to urban areas in the hope of escaping poverty and low paying agricultural jobs, causing social problems in the cities. In order to address that problem several measures had been adopted, including the Settlement Transfer Fund Trustees initiative, aimed at formalizing land holdings and thus facilitating access to credit. Other initiatives were aimed at increasing productivity in the agricultural, fishing and livestock sectors.

26. Kenya had hosted the Third Global Youth Employment Summit in 2006, which had been aimed at capacity-building and identifying sustainable approaches to youth employment. In that context, his Government intended to establish a resource centre where young people could access employment-related information and was working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on youth-oriented action plans in such areas as health, crime, community service and education.

27. Kenya had adopted the Persons with Disabilities Act and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Plans were under way to establish a fund for persons with disabilities and improve the benefits and services available to them, including extended retirement, employment privileges and tax exemptions for materials related to their disability. In that regard, he stressed the need to continue efforts to enable the disabled to enjoy normal lives. While progress had been made towards social development, continued progress would be slow without stronger partnerships with the international community, civil society and the private sector. A concerted effort must therefore be made to develop joint initiatives, transfer technology and engage with youth and persons with disabilities in order to achieve internationally agreed development goals.

28. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that international progress towards social goals had been uneven, with disparities between rich and poor increasing in recent years. The trend had been exacerbated by the current economic crisis and soaring commodity prices, which affected the most vulnerable groups particularly. The problems of unemployment and underemployment were most acute in the developing world, where most of the labour force was to be found, but where there were relatively few opportunities for full and productive employment. Employment generation was therefore crucial. Unilateral sanctions imposed on countries for political reasons had a detrimental effect on employment generation, depriving citizens of their right to work. Such sanctions forced investors to shut down factories, hampering development and causing thousands of people to lose their jobs.

29. Myanmar was on track to carry out the Millennium Development Goals, with a national plan

focusing on balanced development of rural and urban areas. Significant progress had been achieved in the areas of poverty eradication, primary education, health care and environmental sustainability. Development projects, which provided job opportunities, were being implemented around the country. New cases of HIV/AIDS infections and other serious diseases were down, and gains had been made in maternity and child health care.

30. **Mr. Koh** Sang-wook (Republic of Korea) said that, despite world economic growth, problems such as income disparity, unemployment, population ageing and inadequate social protection remained. Continued efforts must therefore be made to implement the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development, and he welcomed the analysis and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/133). Particular attention must be paid to meeting the needs of socially vulnerable groups including women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities and migrants.

31. He also welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/63/95), in particular the proposed strategic implementation framework for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. By 2050 one out of every 10 persons in the world would be 60 or over and population ageing would lead to social and economic problems. More than 400 million older persons lived below the poverty line in the developing countries. Poverty reduction strategies must focus on the poorest and most vulnerable older persons, especially women, in order to meet the goal of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.

32. Population ageing raised such issues as income security, social insurance, pension, life-long education and social welfare systems to meet the needs of the elderly. While in many less developed countries older persons had been cared for within the family, Governments were currently faced with the task of tackling the needs of their ageing populations, with international help. The Republic of Korea was the most rapidly aging society in the world, with the ratio of persons 65 or over expected to rise from 7.2 per cent in 2000 to more than 30 per cent by 2040. Accordingly, in 2006 his Government had developed a five-year policy to address the challenge of ageing, reform the retirement system and strengthen the old age safety net. It would continue to review its policy and implement the Madrid Plan of Action and share lessons learned with international partners.

33. Despite the remarkable social progress made in social development, challenges remained, including equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth and the elimination of social discrimination, especially against vulnerable groups. While every country must develop policies based on its specific situation, he urged all nations to join his Government in working to promote the shared goal of making the world more prosperous and equitable.

34. **Ms. Medal Garrido** (Nicaragua) said that, in a globalized economy that benefited the few and kept the many in poverty, the current crisis of the so-called free market system seemed to indicate that capitalism and social development were incompatible. The World Summit for Social Development had underscored the need for people-centred development and the elimination of inequality, yet little concrete progress had been made while the challenges seemed to become greater and greater, aggravated by the current financial instability and a food crisis caused by the increase in energy prices.

35. Given the unsustainable levels of unemployment and the lack of social development in the developing countries, the time had come to create a new financial and trade system in which Governments acted aggressively to balance economic growth and social development and formulated both national and international economic and social policies. The promotion of full employment and decent work for all should be at the centre of any such system, which must likewise include fair trade, the elimination of agricultural subsidies, the development of rural areas and agriculture in the developing countries and transfer of technology and specialized knowledge.

36. Her Government had made health care and education accessible to all and was working to increase the quality of education by reforming curricula to make Nicaraguan students more competitive, promote leadership and increase awareness about sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, self-awareness, interpersonal relations and gender equality. Low-interest loans had been provided to help farmers grow crops and sell them at reasonable prices. Support had been provided to small and medium enterprises, which accounted for 90 per cent of businesses, and

60 per cent of jobs, in particular for women and young people. Public financing was available and technical support centres offered advisory services. In Nicaragua the goal was not simply to promote job creation but to enhance the quality of jobs. For example, the minimum wage had been increased by 51 per cent.

37. Measures had been adopted to benefit women and families, by facilitating access to justice, credit, property, housing, training, which in turn increased the role that they played in society. An adult education programme and a literacy promotion campaign had been launched. Secondary school students visited isolated settlements to promote literacy. In addition, for the first time in the Caribbean region, social development programmes placed special emphasis on helping the indigenous population, which was disproportionately affected by poverty. Her Government was also trying to meet the needs of disabled persons by, for example, increasing their pensions and strengthening social programmes targeting them, and had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons.

38. The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), based on the principles of solidarity, social justice, sovereignty, complementarity and fair trade, had played an important role in her Government's social renewal policies. She reiterated the importance of placing the economy at the service of mankind. Such an approach was diametrically opposed to current efforts to revive the moribund international financial system based on socializing losses by making the population as a whole pay for failures, while profits were privatized and shared by only a small minority at the expense of the majority.

39. **Mr. Sen** (India) said that achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all had been the theme of the multi-year programme of work of the World Summit for Social Development as well as the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that social policies had to be mainstreamed into macroeconomic policies. The current financial crisis made such mainstreaming a categorical imperative. Just a few days previously, European leaders had criticized speculative capitalism and said that entrepreneurs were needed, not speculators.

40. Similarly, 100 years earlier, the European Trade Union Confederation had stated in Seville in 1907 that casino capitalism should be fought with taxation, regulation and worker involvement. Unfortunately, the policies of stock traders and investment bankers had prevailed, namely tax breaks for the rich, deregulation and no worker involvement. With the demise of Wall Street, it seemed that change was finally taking place. Unfortunately, the lack of equity and debt capital, the collapse of stock markets, and the sharp decline in exports and commodity prices would all have a catastrophic impact on employment across the globe, especially in the developing countries.

41. Given the extent of the crisis, the international financing and trading institutions would have to be restructured, together with international economic governance. The Bretton Woods institutions would have to return to their original mandate of promoting and maintaining high levels of employment. The United Nations could assist with a comprehensive audit of those institutions. It was essential to revive the Doha development round and tackle the real issues: duty-free and quota-free market access for the exports of the least developed countries, cotton subsidies, special products and the special safeguard mechanism in order to protect the vital interests of workers rather than purely commercial interests. Member States had to ensure that decisions were taken while there was still time.

42. In relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it was now all the more vital to increase employment and establish a new economic environment and governance. The least developed countries should use tariffs and domestic subsidies to develop their industries and promote economic development. One positive result of the financial crisis was the renewed recognition of the role of the State. The State and civil society should work together to do what was needed. In India, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, implemented by locally elected councils, provided 100 days assured employment to every household in the country. For the first time, the right to work was legally enforceable. The Act, in association with the Unorganized Sector Workers' Social Security Bill and others, was a means of empowering people to work towards the MDGs and move towards a more inclusive and productive society.

43. In conclusion, the right to education and the right to health were essential elements of the social basis of self-respect. A 1993 decision by the Indian Supreme Court had made the right to education legally

enforceable until the age of 14 years. Poverty levels had already been reduced and the goal was to reduce the percentage of the population living below the poverty line to 18.5 per cent by 2015. Over the period 1999-2005, employment rates had increased more rapidly than the rate of population growth.

44. **Ms. Kafanabo** (United Republic of Tanzania) stated that her delegation aligned itself with the statements made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Lesotho on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Development of the agricultural sector was of particular importance in her country in order to provide full employment and curb poverty because most of the population lived in rural areas. Measures to develop and modernize agriculture were being implemented by the Government, which welcomed a new plan by the World Food Programme to purchase the crops of poor, isolated farmers.

45. She expressed concern at delays in implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The development of a guide to national implementation of the Madrid Plan was a good step. The rights of older people should be respected. In that connection, her delegation supported the recommendation of the Secretary-General that a report on the rights of older persons be submitted at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Likewise, the recommendations of the Secretary-General to develop guidelines for the advancement of persons with disabilities in development was a good step. The United Republic of Tanzania had begun the process of ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

46. Recognizing the centrality of literacy to development, her country had embraced the goal of education for all. Primary education was free and universal, with enrolment above 90 per cent. Near gender parity had been achieved. Nonetheless, illiteracy remained high. An adult education strategy had been put in place to provide basic learning to disadvantaged groups, in particular, women.

47. *Mr. Peralta (Paraguay), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

48. **Mr. Al-Nasser** (Qatar) said that, despite the existence of the political will, funding for adult literacy programmes remained insufficient. The report in document A/63/172 therefore rightly insisted that donor States should prioritize literacy programmes and form partnerships with that end in mind. Qatar had been aware of the importance of the issue from an early stage: illiteracy had begun to recede there from the mid-1990s. The country's Education for a New Phase initiative had been praised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the most successful models of its kind. It entailed the establishment of government schools based on the key principles of independence, accountability, diversity and freedom of choice for students.

49. At the regional and international levels, Qatar had sponsored a number of conferences in cooperation with UNESCO. The spouse of the head of State had acted as that organization's Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education. Such conferences had led notably to the Doha Declaration on Education for All of February 2008. The Declaration stressed expanding the pool of donors to include the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other concerned agencies, and underlined the plight of regions affected by conflict and foreign occupation. Qatar also supported literacy programmes in countries such as Lebanon, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Mauritania.

50. *Mr. Majoor (Netherlands) resumed the Chair.*

51. **Ms. Tadesse** (Ethiopia) said that many efforts were still needed at the global level to achieve the universal goal of eradicating poverty. Despite encouraging progress in some developing countries, the gap between rich and poor continued to widen. Youth unemployment was increasing at an alarming rate, older people still had insufficient social protection and the disabled were increasingly marginalized. Fair trade, a stable financial market, prudent fiscal policies and just labour markets throughout the world were a prerequisite for ending extreme poverty and establishing the infrastructure needed to promote decent work and social protection for all. International cooperation was a key element, and greater economic and social policy coherence were fundamental for creating sustainable employment opportunities.

52. States would need to take a holistic approach to address the issues of unemployment, underemployment and the absence of social protection and to work out a new social contract to bring hope to all members of society. Societal integration and maintaining social peace and security would also contribute to that

agenda. Respect for human rights, democratic principles and transparency, and accountability in international economic and political decision-making were essential components for balanced social development across the globe.

53. The Ethiopian Government had taken measures to accelerate the development of agriculture and small enterprises in order to increase employment. Agriculture was the mainstay of the country's economy, and an agriculture-led industrialization strategy implemented since 1994 had increased overall output as well as employment. The Integrated Housing Development Programme was promoting small and microenterprises to tackle unemployment. In the 2006/2007 budget year, over 2,000 small and microenterprises had participated in housing development programmes. Such development, together with the boom in the construction industry, had created jobs for urban dwellers in both the capital and the regions. A number of technical and vocational training centres had been established, with emphasis on the linkages and synergies between their programmes and the development of small enterprises.

54. Ethiopia had taken a number of measures to implement the outcome of the Second World Assembly on Ageing. A 10-year National Action Plan for Old Persons was based on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and was being translated into various local languages. A Federal Coordination Forum had been established to popularize the Action Plan, and Government agencies involved in its implementation were preparing their own operational plans. Ethiopia had also signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had started the ratification process. In conclusion, she called on development partners to support developing countries in their efforts to create jobs for young people and to provide adequate social protection for the aged and the disabled.

55. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said that in the present global emergency, with an economic recession in addition to the food and energy crises and the challenge of climate change, Member States would have to make even greater efforts to achieve the MDGs by the 2015 deadline. The Goals were based on people-centred growth that provided employment and access to health, education and nutritional food and opportunities to contribute to growth, with an emphasis on both the quality and quantity of employment. A combination of international and national policies was required to favour pro-poor growth and employment and to support the expansion of large, medium-sized and small enterprises. Support for medium-sized enterprises would help to revitalize rural development and agriculture. The precarious situation of poor and unemployed young people should also be an urgent global priority.

56. Specific programmes were needed to address the emerging challenges of mainstreaming disability, the ageing population and social protection into development and employment policies and to overcome gender discrimination in employment. Climate change was another serious challenge and early adaptation measures should be promoted globally in the context of a low-carbon economy. The Committee should add the issue of the social and employment dimensions of climate change to its agenda.

57. The international community should intensify its efforts to implement the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade. Despite the progress made, particularly in developing countries, wide regional disparities persisted. More effective delivery on the ground and new resources through stronger partnerships were needed. Youth literacy programmes would also contribute to reducing youth unemployment and underemployment rates.

58. Indonesia's 12-year basic education development plan exceeded international targets for universal primary education. Access to primary education was already almost universal, and the literacy rate for persons over 15 years had reached 92.8 per cent in 2007. Education policy actions were focused on expanding and improving access to learning opportunities, improving teacher performance, increasing the education budget to 20 per cent of the State budget and promoting gender-based interventions. Full, productive and decent work should continue to be at the centre of macroeconomic policies to ensure that economic growth was inclusive. Small and medium-sized enterprises deserved greater support in view of their resilience to global shocks and their proven record of contributing to employment and the agricultural sector and rural development.

59. **Ms. Kavun** (Ukraine) said that her country aligned itself fully with the statement made by the Presidency of the European Union and reiterated its

commitment to the complete and effective implementation of the goals set out in the global social development agenda. Decent living standards were the primary goal of reform in Ukraine. A new set of social initiatives had been announced by its President in 2007. They included raising the minimum wage; increasing military allowances; increasing the salaries of public sector employees and of teachers, doctors and other professionals in rural regions; and providing benefits to families with five or more children, including allowances, priority access to public housing and free tuition at public universities for children from such families. Furthermore, rural medical clinics would all be equipped with at least one ambulance before the end of 2008.

60. Other reforms were planned to combat poverty, assist the elderly and persons with disabilities and provide additional social protections called for in the current market economy. Policies and strategies to achieve full employment and decent work for all should include specific measures to promote gender equality and social integration of marginalized groups. Consideration of the issue of social integration as a priority theme by the Commission for Social Development would contribute significantly to reducing inequalities, promoting access to basic social services and increasing the participation of social groups.

61. **Mr. Paudel** (Nepal) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Nepal was undergoing major sociopolitical transformations, and its legislature, one of the most inclusive in the world in terms of ethnicity, gender and geographic region, was in the process of drafting a new constitution. The 2007-2010 interim plan contained provisions to improve the quality of life of the poor and promote economic development and social inclusion, including for indigenous peoples. New policies provided social security for the elderly and for widows.

62. A Ministry of Youth had been established. Young people would be involved in policy development, the restructuring of the State and the socio-economic transformation. The Government also sought to end illiteracy and make education inclusive and equitable at all levels, including making primary education universal. Nepal had formulated a national policy and action plan for people with disabilities. A national committee for disabled persons had been established, and the law on civil service had been amended to give persons with disabilities opportunities for employment with the Government. Lastly, the international community should do more to provide assistance to the least developed countries, least developed countries emerging from conflict, and landlocked developing countries, which were bearing the brunt of the food, fuel and energy crises.

63. **Mr. Monterey Suay** (El Salvador) said his country was implementing over 30 programmes to improve conditions and opportunities for the country's youth, which accounted for around 19 per cent of the population. El Salvador agreed with the findings of international agencies and think tanks, contained in documents such as the World Bank's World Development Report 2007, which found that investment in younger persons would continue to be the key to development. Such policies were a fundamental prerequisite for social development. El Salvador was preparing to host the XVIII Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, which would discuss youth and development.

64. Education and the spread of literacy were one of the most important ways to break the circle of poverty. The Government was committed to projects including financial support for families in order to keep children in school. Gender equality was also being supported, notably by including gender issues in national curricula and promoting education for girls.

65. El Salvador was working to honour its commitment to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. A commission had been formed gathering legal representatives from the concerned agencies, with a view to making national legislation compatible with the Convention. The Ministry of Education was enacting policies to foster diversity and mainstreaming in education, and the Government continued to work to achieve the MDGs.

66. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country remained committed to the outcomes of the World Summits for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 and 2000. The Government sought to establish a social market economy which would balance a productive and sustainable economy with equitable income redistribution. In view of the rapid changes in information and communications technology, the creation of employment opportunities

was a pressing issue. Education for All would be vital to promote social and economic development. National plans were being enacted by capable, creative and socially responsible individuals. Volunteers had also been instrumental in implementing projects that had raised employment.

67. The Syrian Arab Republic had been at the forefront of efforts to protect disabled persons. The tenth Five-Year Plan had singled out a number of approaches, such as direct financial assistance, aid projects and attention to disadvantaged groups. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had earmarked funds to benefit disabled persons. Legislation had been passed determining that 4 per cent of public-sector posts would be reserved for disabled persons; providing incentives for companies that hired such persons; exempting organizations active in that domain from customs duties; and granting a 50 per cent discount on land, sea and air travel, depending on the nature of the disability. The Syrian Arab Republic had signed the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons and formed a National Committee to work towards ratifying the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

68. The right to development and decent work ought not to be ignored in the case of peoples affected by foreign occupation, instability and aggression. He hoped that the Third Committee would address the issue of disabilities caused by the use of weapons, such as cluster bombs and landmines, and that the proposed strategic implementation framework for the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing would consider the needs of older persons living under foreign occupation.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/63/SR.4

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Third Committee

Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 7 October 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Margarian (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Armenia)

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08-53818 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), Mr. Margarian (Armenia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 55: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/63/133)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/63/183 and A/63/184)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/63/95)

(d) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*) (A/63/172)

(e) Review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (*continued*) (A/63/183)

1. **Ms. Péan Mevs** (Haiti) considered that, in a world rocked by crises, social programmes should be expanded in order to ensure that socially vulnerable categories were not excluded. In Haiti, successive hurricanes had thwarted the efforts of the Government, exacerbated the economic situation of the country and hindered the resumption of social reconstruction but, given the vital importance of education, a programme for school reconstruction had been set up, as a result of which classes had resumed at the start of the school year. The Haitian Government had also released 90 million gourdes, the management of which would be entrusted to the Economic and Social Assistance Fund.

2. Over half of the families in Haiti were single-parent families, and large numbers of women brought up their children on their own. There was, however, a poverty alleviation programme, and legislative measures were planned to ensure that men assumed their parental responsibilities.

3. The economic, food and oil crises, low wages and natural disasters had an impact on the living conditions of older persons, who were increasingly numerous. Although they were generally cared for by relatives and could seek help from the Social Assistance Fund, she acknowledged that the authorities concerned should do more. The Family Wellness Association facilitated intergenerational meetings with the focus on older persons and involving mentoring, social assistance and leisure programmes.

4. The Government was preparing the final version of a national policy document on disabilities and had signed a protocol of agreement with the United Nations Population Fund with a view to strengthening the intervention capacities of the State with respect to the integration of disabled persons. The document provided for the publication of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons and its translation into Creole.

5. Lastly, her Government wished to ensure the harmonization of social policies and thereby to reduce the vulnerability of marginal groups, a process that required the ongoing support of the international community. In that connection, she urged donors to fulfil their promises.

6. **Ms. Al-Marzouqi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the social situation of over half the population of the world prevented it from living in dignity as it was facing major problems such as poverty, disease, unemployment, illiteracy, organized crime and conflicts. She commended the efforts of the United Nations in the field of social development and urged the international community to follow up all the conferences that had taken place and to honour the commitments made.

7. Her country was trying to improve the standard of living of its population by allocating all the financial and human resources necessary for that purpose and by becoming truly involved in world partnerships so as to build a society in which everyone enjoyed the benefits of prosperity, security and peace. According to social development indicators, the income of individuals was steadily increasing together with expenditure by the State on medical and educational services. Illiteracy was decreasing, and women (who currently constituted 59 per cent of the employment force and held four ministerial portfolios) were increasingly taking part in the process of decision-making. An initial programme of work had been launched to achieve sustainable development and attain a decent standard of living.

8. Her country offered free education at all levels in order to provide young people with work skills and

was adapting its national curricula to developments in the labour market. At the international level, thanks to the Dubai Initiative and in partnership with international bodies, over 4 million children had been enrolled in schools in 14 countries in Africa, South Asia and the Middle East.

9. The health services were of a very high standard and had achieved a significant reduction in child mortality and the total elimination of many childhood diseases, and had brought malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis under control. At the international level, the United Arab Emirates had launched the "Noor Dubai" initiative, which was designed to treat millions of people suffering from eye diseases, particularly in Africa and Asia.

10. Her Government had adopted laws to protect human rights: it prohibited the participation of children in camel racing and had criminalized human trafficking. It had regulated the working hours of household employees and improved their working conditions. It had created a national committee against human trafficking and a human rights association. In addition, it provided care for people with special needs and had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

11. She drew attention to the special interest taken in the treatment of offenders and to the creation of special centres which provided training to enable them to reintegrate into society.

12. Her Government was also providing service centres for older persons in remote areas.

13. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that the current discussions would induce the international community to keep the promises made with a view to improving the humanitarian and social situation of all peoples.

14. **Ms. Sow** (Senegal) said that the serious economic crisis following the soaring oil and food prices, as well as the harmful effects of climate change, were likely to jeopardize the efforts made by the poor countries and prevent them from attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The international community should make greater efforts and give effect to the promises made.

15. To contend with the food crisis, Senegal had waged a major agricultural offensive for food and abundance and had adopted social development and solidarity policies so as effectively to contend with maternal and child mortality. Legislation was in place designed to make it possible for children to enjoy healthy development, a satisfactory nutritional status and protection to enable them to develop their intellectual and mental faculties and their psycho-motor skills. The Government was also combating sexist stereotypes and sociocultural prejudices with a view to enabling women to play their role to the full and to participate effectively in development and in decision-making. It promoted the retention of girls in school and access by women to basic social services.

16. Although poor older persons were generally looked after by relatives, the Government had adopted measures to improve the medical services that they used and to promote their retraining and personal development while strengthening the role of the family.

17. In order to protect the rights of disabled persons, improve the safety of their social and vocational environment and facilitate their social integration, the Government had begun to create social rehabilitation centres in which their education could be more effectively provided for.

18. In addition to the adoption of legal arrangements and the creation of numerous appropriate instruments, the Government was seeking to coordinate and promote the prevention and management of risks and disasters, to prevent major industrial accidents and floods and to enhance welfare assistance to vulnerable groups. In that context, it had established a dynamic economic and social policy designed to provide long-term solutions and to consolidate social cohesion and integration in a development perspective. It encouraged a joining of forces and in-depth reform of cooperation machinery for sustainable development.

19. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that the current situation, with its multiple food, energy and financial crises, once again illustrated the importance of the commitments undertaken in Copenhagen in 1995.

20. Most internationally agreed frameworks, including the Millennium Development Goals, provided the guidelines and tools necessary to meet fixed targets in various fields. In order to advance the socio-economic agenda, coordination and cooperation must be strengthened at all levels.

21. Advances had been made in achieving the goals of the World Summit for Social Development, but they

were not equitably distributed. The problems preventing some countries from attaining the necessary level of development must be systematically addressed.

22. His Government, which attached great importance to the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development and other conferences, together with the Millennium Development Goals, was committed to attaining a more equitable social system that would take into account the problems of all stakeholders. In the quest for justice and equality, his Government delivered social services to all regions of the country, in particular the rural areas, where even basic services were often lacking.

23. Governments should adopt initiatives and strategies that reflected national realities and priorities. His own Government's policy was aimed at restoring and rebuilding the country's economic, social and physical infrastructure and, to that end, was mobilizing its meagre human, material and financial resources, particularly young people, in a vast national socio-economic development programme. That policy, which required enormous sacrifices in terms of human and financial resources, had brought about the establishment of a basic infrastructure on which to build further sustainable economic and social development.

24. The Secretary-General's report dealt with disabled persons, an issue which had been taken up as a priority in his Government's development programme with the aim of ensuring the effective participation of disabled persons in all areas by raising their profile in society. The guidelines and programmes for disabled persons were specifically tailored to improve their access to health and rehabilitation services; education and vocational training; employment; devices to improve mobility and communications; and housing for the most vulnerable. His delegation looked forward to considering the Secretary-General's recommendations with regard to the three disability-specific instruments aimed at improving coordination and cooperation for the benefit of disabled persons.

25. **Mr. Olukanni** (Nigeria) said that his country had created the necessary framework for certain initiatives and had implemented the recommendations resulting from the World Summit for Social Development from a people-centred perspective. Under its seven-point programme, his Government had elaborated specific plans to promote economic growth, job creation and improved productivity, while focusing on young people and the goal of providing decent jobs for all, with the support of civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, together with United Nations agencies.

26. Social development also entailed the improvement of the situation of ageing persons, young people and the disabled. His Government had therefore adopted, together with its programme for the integration of destitute persons, a multisectoral approach to poverty reduction and was promoting the right to education, family health, environmental protection, family protection, peace and security. The International Day of Disabled Persons would be celebrated at the national level.

27. His Government's concern over poverty among older persons, especially older women, had led it to incorporate age-related issues into its poverty reduction strategies and development programmes. A national policy on ageing had been prepared and would be submitted to the Federal Executive Council for approval. Day-care centres for older persons had been established in 36 states of the federation, and steps had been taken to provide material assistance to homes for the ageing and to older persons still living in their communities.

28. His Government had adopted a labour standards law to combat exclusion and social discrimination and promote gender equality in the workplace. It had also set up a national poverty eradication programme to unite the Government with local authorities, commercial banks, microlenders, cooperatives and companies in providing loans for the urban and rural poor and for female entrepreneurs.

29. Aware that the development of agriculture and small-scale enterprises could help bring about full employment and decent jobs for all, his Government had set up institutions to promote the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises and sought to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit among youth and women.

30. He expressed concern, however, about the current recession and its potential impact on social development.

31. **Ms. Ochir** (Mongolia) said that, despite the international community's efforts to meet the targets of the United Nations Literacy Decade, global illiteracy

rates were still far too high; that situation was all the more unacceptable in that access to literacy and education was a fundamental right and an essential element of growth and development. In order to survive in the modern world, it was necessary to know how to use information. Her delegation therefore called for increased efforts to improve literacy, closer cooperation among all stakeholders and the adoption of innovative strategies.

32. Aware of the importance of literacy, her Government was committed to achieving, as key elements of its development strategies, universal primary education and the elimination of gender inequities in primary and secondary education.

33. Her Government had also adopted an education sector master plan for 2006-2015 and a literacy programme (2004-2012) containing provisions for summer literacy courses. Through such energetic efforts, the adult literacy rate had been raised to 97.8 per cent.

34. Convinced that education and literacy, including functional literacy, were key to enabling persons to find suitable employment and participate in civil society, her Government was making efforts to improve the quality of education and of vocational and technical training, in particular computer training and the teaching of English.

35. **Mr. Addo** (Ghana) said that Ghana, a developing country that continued to struggle with poverty, had taken economic measures to help youth, in particular by establishing a Youth Fund, which provided soft loans to young people who had studied under apprenticeship programmes, especially in agribusiness. In order to control youth unemployment, the Government had established a national youth employment programme in 2006, through which more than 100,000 young people had found work in various sectors of the economy.

36. Education remained a priority for his Government, which had conferred the right to free, compulsory primary education in its 1992 Constitution. An education trust fund had been established in 1994 to boost investment in education, and a State-funded feeding programme had been set up for primary schoolchildren. The infrastructure of many schools had been improved, and new schools had been built in response to the increased enrolment rates. In some primary and secondary schools, compulsory computer training courses were being provided on a pilot basis.

37. The health infrastructure in Ghana had been much improved. The Government had set up a health insurance system, which had modernized health services throughout the country and was benefiting young people. The Ghana AIDS Commission had intensified its education programmes for youth, focusing on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and managing high-risk behaviour.

38. Youth groups involved in environmental protection had sprung up in schools and were tackling issues such as climate change, pollution, erosion and other environmental concerns.

39. **Mr. Poku-Bonsu** (Ghana) said that there was still too little investment in initiatives to help young people start enterprises, and that the Ghanaian private sector remained reluctant to invest in youth development programmes.

40. As volunteerism was still the most accessible type of work, young Ghanaians were asking for more logistical and financial support for their organizations, and they called on the competent United Nations bodies to facilitate exchanges among the young people of all countries.

41. Young Ghanaians wanted to participate in formulating policies and taking decisions that affected them.

42. **Mr. Covaliu** (Romania) noted with concern that, according to the International Labour Organization, youth unemployment remained alarmingly high despite the global economic expansion. Although young people currently had more opportunities for finding a decent job, many found themselves unemployed after completing their schooling, forced to accept low-paying or informal-sector jobs, in deplorable conditions and lacking access to social services and medical care. There was an urgent need for policies to facilitate young people's access to the labour market, because the problems of youth today could destabilize society tomorrow.

43. **Ms. Martin** (Romania) said that it was important to review curricula, in order to ensure that schools provided young people with the knowledge and skills required by current economic realities, and to put in place educational systems that took into account the current and future needs of youth.

44. It was also necessary to recognize the role of youth organizations in the global economy and development. Young people should engage more actively in volunteer work in their communities and thereby acquire the general skills that they needed in order to find jobs more easily.

45. Lastly, employment policies should focus on the following priorities: abolishing the worst forms of child labour; promoting youth self-employment and entrepreneurship; integrating youth employment policies into national strategies; and granting microcredits to young entrepreneurs, in order to enhance their personal development and that of the society in which they lived.

46. The youth of today were the leaders of tomorrow. They should have the chance to meet their full potential, educate themselves, defend their rights, participate actively in the decision-making process and make choices.

47. As for Romanian youth, they were very energetic and were reaping the benefits of the creation of new structures, such as the Romanian Youth Council, the National Youth Authority and the National Agency for the Support of Youth Initiatives.

48. **Mr. Mulgrave** (Jamaica), speaking as his country's youth delegate, said that the Jamaican athletes who had participated in the twenty-ninth Olympic Games in Beijing had been a source of inspiration and that, with that kind of determination, goals could be achieved, including the Millennium Development Goals.

49. While it was true that some progress had been made, it was not certain that all of the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved by 2015. The Caribbean region, for its part, was behind in its efforts and would fail to reach the Goals without the contribution of its young people.

50. It was encouraging to note that the United Nations had developed an international policy on youth, specifically the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Young people represented one fifth of the 6 billion people living in the world. Some 86 per cent of them lived in developing countries, including the Caribbean Member States. It was to be hoped that the young people of the region would be able to increase their contribution to the development of policies at the international level, considering that Jamaica was the only member State of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that had included youth delegates in its delegation to the General Assembly. The CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Programme could play a useful role in that regard.

51. He endorsed the statements made by fellow youth delegates, including those from Germany and Switzerland, and called on Member States to support the participation of young people at the United Nations, in particular by including youth delegates in their delegations.

52. Young people, who would be tomorrow's leaders, joined in the appeal by Caribbean leaders encouraging the international community to devise strategic programmes to address the particular needs of middle-income countries, with deep pockets of poverty.

53. The world was faced with specific problems that called for eclectic solutions, and the involvement of young leaders was imperative. Youth policies should be changed where necessary, youth councils should be established where there were none, technology should be used as a tool to reach the young "technocentric" generation, and social policies should stress the importance of family stability.

54. **Mr. Onderčo** (Slovakia), speaking on behalf of the youth of his country, said that, unfortunately, for many young people around the world life was poor and harsh. Young people, particularly girls, were not given the role that they should have in society. Although the importance of their participation had been recognized in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, they faced many difficulties when they tried to participate in society, owing, inter alia, to the perception that society had of them.

55. A case in point was that of the young people of his city, which was very traditional and conservative. The creation of a youth parliament in Prešov had enabled young people to participate in city management. It had proven that young people were not only willing to participate responsibly in decision-making, but were also able to do so.

56. The decision to allow the participation of young people not only helped to empower them politically, it also helped change the public perception of young people. As noted in the World Youth Report 2007, young people were in many cases the driving force in their countries' development.

57. The participation of young people was not limited to political organizations or organized movements. More and more young people were serving as volunteers in order to improve the situation of their countries.

58. It was regrettable that, despite the commitments undertaken, only 30 of the 193 Member States had sent youth delegates to the United Nations. It was in the interest of all to strengthen the participation of young people.

59. **Mr. Qasimli** (Azerbaijan), speaking as a youth delegate from his country, said that, for many young people, globalization had become synonymous with insecurity and heightened inequality instead of greater economic and social development. When the labour market was no longer accessible for them, they were often faced with poverty and exclusion.

60. If the goal of sustainable development was to be achieved, priority must be given to developing poverty eradication strategies. In order to enable young people to find their place in society, existing policies, partnerships and programmes should also be adapted by focusing on employment, health, gender equality and education, bearing in mind the constantly evolving markets. The international community must move beyond generalities to find solutions to immediate problems while maintaining a long-term perspective.

61. The main objective was to help young people move from dependency to self-reliance, for example, by encouraging those who wanted to set up their own business, offering them advice and providing them with start-up capital, including through microcredit programmes. Training and continuing education programmes should also be set up. Such activities would facilitate collaboration between Governments and civil society.

62. Young people should also be protected from influences that could interfere with their transition to healthy adulthood. The world had never been so rich, and yet more than 1 billion people were living in extreme poverty. The figures provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on education, nutrition and child health were shocking and showed that action must be taken.

63. Azerbaijan had taken measures to address the situation of young people who had been affected by the conflict with Armenia. Legislation on youth had been amended, a new State programme on education abroad had been set up to enable 5,000 students to participate, and new schools had been built in mountainous regions of the country. A youth employment summit had also been held from 24 to 27 September 2008.

64. **Ms. Shaw** (Australia) said that in her capacity as a youth representative for her country, she had met with over 5,000 young Australians from different walks of life over a period of five months. A constant theme brought up at those meetings had been the desire of young people to participate in the development of their communities. Social inclusion and civic engagement were basic tenets of democracy.

65. Young people had always sought opportunities to participate within their communities and had blazed trails where no one else had gone before. They had played a vital role in leading social movements in such areas as civil rights, women's rights and higher education and in the anti-war movement. In May 2008, Australian youth had participated in preparations for the 2020 Youth Summit and in setting up the Australian Youth Forum and had developed and administered the largest consultation of young people, in Australia.

66. Young people were not simply the leaders of tomorrow; they were also leading members of their communities today. They must be given the education and skills to enable them to protect the environment and play a role in society so as to make the world more just and promote democracy and multilateralism.

67. **Ms. Poole** (Australia) said that, as she had noticed in her travels throughout the country and in her meetings with youth delegates, young people had many things in common, such as optimism, honesty and the courage to raise questions. They knew that, in a rapidly changing world where violence and discrimination against women were systemic, and inequalities were enormous, fundamental change was needed. Climate change, for example, was very real for young Australians, as it affected them personally, especially in regions affected by drought; however, it was also an opportunity to build a more humane and sustainable global society.

68. Young people wanted to know why the question of climate change was not a priority, why ending extreme poverty was so complex, why trade agreements were respected, but targets for alleviating human suffering were not. They had questions because life on the planet depended on it. They were idealistic

because idealism was the force behind change. They wanted to hope and dream and, to be able to do so, they needed to have a voice at the international level and within United Nations agencies.

69. **Ms. Giménez-Jiménez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her Government's social policy focused on equality, poverty elimination, the universal and equitable exercise of human rights and social, economic and cultural rights, and increased social and public participation, in particular on the part of groups which had been traditionally marginalized, such as indigenous peoples, the poor, children and adolescents, older persons and women. With reference to the Secretary-General's report (A/63/133), she said that achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all could not be possible without universal access to basic social protection, particularly for unorganized sector workers and migrant workers.

70. The measures that her country had taken included the unanimous adoption on 16 July 2008 of a law for the social protection of housewives, which also covered migrant women, and the enactment of a law on microcredit, which guaranteed access by the poorest to credit and fostered the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the establishment of cooperatives and other social structures for production. In 2006, 31 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) had been devoted to social investment, with the largest share for education (37.5 per cent) followed by social security (26.3 per cent) and health (13.3 per cent). In the area of sustainable agricultural development, "Zamoran farms" had been created, which were individual and collective socio-productive units set up in agricultural areas reclaimed by the National Land Institute and which benefited from financial and technical support. That programme had made it possible for 1.3 million hectares of unused land to be used again between 2005 and 2006. Lastly, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had been declared free of illiteracy by UNESCO in October 2005.

71. With regard to regional cooperation, her country had launched initiatives which focused on solidarity, such as the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean (ALBA), and proposed that the Organization of American States (OAS) should adopt a social charter of the Americas for the promotion and protection of the social, economic, environmental and cultural rights of the peoples of the Americas.

72. She emphasized the need for the international community to honour its pledge to allocate 0.7 per cent of GDP to official development assistance by 2015. To that end, her Government was opposed to the selective allocation of assistance, which tended to reproduce the old colonial relationships that some donor countries maintained with recipient countries. Development was not possible under a neo-liberal economic model, which favoured the market and capital over human beings.

73. In conclusion, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela considered that social integration was key to eliminating poverty and enabled all groups in society, particularly those which were traditionally marginalized, to take full advantage of every aspect of human life. It reiterated its commitment to fight against poverty and in favour of human dignity.

74. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that the financial, food and oil crises, linked to the asymmetrical impact of globalization, the failed Doha Round negotiations and increased economic competition had created a risk of recession which required a re-examination of the global economy. The drop in official development assistance, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, increasing poverty and the fact that developing countries were marginalized from international economic decision-making processes hindered the ability to achieve fair and equitable social development.

75. It was important to reaffirm the commitments made during the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and the 2005 World Summit, namely the commitments to full employment and decent work for all. In order to achieve those objectives, it was necessary to ensure equitable international trade and equal opportunities for developing countries, whose economies were mostly based on agrarian and labour-intensive workforce. Priority should also be given to the financing of microprojects for agricultural development and the building of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Likewise, it was essential to honour the commitments made vis-à-vis official development assistance, debt relief and the transfer of technology.

76. The recently elected democratic Government of Pakistan had attached high priority to promoting employment opportunities by enhancing economic growth and the development and welfare of its people

through the empowerment of all stakeholders, particularly women. In that regard, Pakistan's Medium-Term Development Framework for 2005-2010 emphasized reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals for development so as to put in place a just and sustainable economic system.

77. Pakistan's agency for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which employed the bulk of the non-agricultural and partially employed workforce in Pakistan, provided support to 3.5 million SMEs all over the country. Moreover, to promote youth employment, the Government had launched a nation-wide internship programme in the public sector, involving 20,000 interns the first year, and which should benefit up to 50,000 graduates annually. Lastly, special quotas had been established for women and persons with disabilities in public sector jobs, and their employment was also encouraged in the private sector.

78. **Ms. Stewart** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the 97th session of the International Labour Conference, held in June 2008, had adopted the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. The Declaration aimed to strengthen the capacity of ILO to support its members' efforts to promote progress and social justice, through the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda, which were interdependent. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, following the call by more than 150 heads of State and of Government at the 2005 World Summit and the 2006 Ministerial Declaration of the Economic and Social Council, had requested the entire multilateral system to mainstream the principle of employment and decent work for all in their programmes, policies and activities. The Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work was the first multilateral system-wide effort of its kind and enabled agencies and national stakeholders to more coherently and effectively achieve employment and decent work outcomes in international and national development agendas and to contribute to the United Nations reform.

79. The forthcoming publication "Global Employment Trends for Youth" showed that the number of unemployed youth had increased by 13.6 per cent from 1997 to 2007, from 63 million to 71 million. Youth made up as much as two thirds of the world's unemployed, but only one fourth of the total working-age population. An increasing number of countries were implementing national action plans on youth employment, and ILO had recently published a guide for the preparation of such plans in response to General Assembly resolutions inviting it to work together with the United Nations Secretariat, the World Bank and other United Nations entities in the framework of the Youth Employment Network. ILO was also working with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on a project to promote best practices in youth policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, and with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a project promoting productive and decent work for youth in the Mano River basin.

80. In relation to the ageing population, the 98th session of the International Labour Conference would hold a general discussion based on an integrated approach to employment and social protection issues. ILO had analysed the conditions of work and employment which could affect the willingness and capacity of older workers to look for, or remain longer in, paid employment. Its Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, in collaboration with the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities, had developed a workplace training module which aimed to change perceptions concerning the employment of older workers.

81. The ILO Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities (Convention No. 156) was the key international labour standard for addressing conflicts between work and family responsibilities. ILO was holding tripartite meetings on the policies and action enhancing coordination to address needs of workers with family responsibilities and the needs of their employers. The ILO Convention concerning Maternity Protection (Convention No. 183), adopted in 2000, was the other key international labour standard in that area, and its implementation had made it one of the indicators of progress towards Goals 4 and 5 of the Millennium Development Goals. Governments which had not already done so were, therefore, urged to ratify that Convention. Lastly, a publication on workplace partnerships for child-care solutions drawing on case studies from nine countries at different levels of development was being finalized.

82. **Ms. Padgham** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that

volunteers played a vital role in the delivery of economic and humanitarian services in their communities. As the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers approached, she urged Governments to accept and enhance the essential role that volunteers played in the development of their countries. She was pleased to note that the United Nations Volunteers Programme, an essential partner of the Federation, was working to quantify the contribution of volunteers to the gross domestic product in developing countries. Volunteers were increasingly called upon to provide social services to disadvantaged or marginalized members of communities, ageing populations in particular, especially as Governments seemed to be reducing their commitments to the delivery of social services. At the same time, the contribution of trained volunteers to humanitarian relief had been recognized as essential.

83. There was a need to invest in the training of volunteers more than ever, given the magnitude of recent disasters and other emergencies. The Federation encouraged Governments to support its efforts to that end, including by creating favourable legislative frameworks that enhanced volunteers' potential for contributing to the development of their societies and addressed the safety and well-being of volunteers.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/63/SR.5

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Summary record of the 5th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 9 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:	Mr. Majoor	(Netherlands)
later:	Mr. Peralta (Vice-Chairman)	(Paraguay)
later:	Mr. Majoor (Chairman)	(Netherlands)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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08-54295 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 97: Crime prevention and criminal justice (A/63/87, 89, 90 and 99; A/C.3/63/L.2)

Agenda item 98: International drug control (A/63/111)

Statement by the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

1. **Mr. Costa** (Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)), introducing the item, said that poor socio-economic performance and weak rule of law were part of a vicious circle. Although the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) did not include strengthening the rule of law, the latter was a necessary condition for their realization. To that end, UNODC had called for support for countries in West Africa, Central America and the Caribbean that lacked the means to defend themselves from drug traffickers, and were increasingly unlikely to meet the MDGs. The Office was working with regional organizations and development banks to help those countries. In the same way, it appealed for aid for the opium-growing regions of Afghanistan and the coca-growing regions of the Andean countries: the eradication of drugs and of poverty were mutually reinforcing.

2. As the broker and guardian of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the Office was providing technical assistance, notably to develop a review mechanism for the Convention and to elaborate anti-corruption strategies. However, many countries, including members of the Group of Eight, had not signed the Convention, while others lacked the means or will to implement it. One success was the recent Stolen Asset Recovery (StAR) Initiative, organized jointly by the Office and the World Bank and designed to recover funds stolen by kleptocratic rulers. Cooperation with national authorities and financial centres was progressing, and would benefit from further assistance.

3. Criminal activity, including drugs cultivation and trafficking, prospered in areas beyond the control of central government, where drugs and crime were often linked with politically motivated violence. In order to enhance security, it was necessary to make greater use of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols. The fourth session of the conference of the Parties to the Convention currently taking place in Vienna provided an opportunity to do so.

4. At the regional level, the Office had brokered the establishment of a Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Centre, which would soon begin operations. He was pleased to note that the Russian Federation had recently agreed to participate. A similar centre, the Gulf Centre for Criminal Intelligence, was being planned among the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The Office was promoting trilateral counter-narcotics cooperation between Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, and was working with the Caribbean Community and the Organization of American States. In West Africa, it was promoting a ministerial conference supported and hosted by the Economic Community of West African States, to be held in Cape Verde in late October 2008.

5. The Office was now the foremost provider of United Nations counter-terrorism assistance. It had developed a range of practical tools, including the software to strengthen criminal justice, combat money-laundering and prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals.

6. In order to combat human trafficking, the Office was delivering technical assistance to strengthen prevention, protection and prosecution. In so doing, it followed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention. He supported the proposal for a General Assembly plan of action against human trafficking, as a means to complement and support the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The momentum of the General Assembly would be necessary to reinforce the Office's technical work.

7. Organized crime could also be a health issue. In addition to drug use, two examples were the sale of medicine and the forced removal of human organs, neither of which had been addressed by the United Nations. The Office's *World Drug Reports* gave strong evidence that the global drug problem had stabilized, although it had not decreased. Severe drug addiction had been contained to less than 0.5 per cent of the world's population. While continuing to take action to contain supply, the Office had over the previous years promoted the idea that drug addiction was a health and social issue. It held that true harm reduction consisted of avoiding drugs completely. He urged Member States to actively participate in the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on illicit drugs to be held in Vienna in March 2009; it was important to

finalize a drug-control blueprint and a ministerial declaration.

8. The scope of the Office's mandate far outstripped its resources. It therefore relied on cooperation with a wide range of United Nations agencies to combat human trafficking and corruption. He was grateful to the Member States for their support, in particular regarding the initiative to form a working group on governance and budget at the Office.

9. **Mr. Dapkiunas** (Belarus) asked whether the proposed plan of action to counter trafficking in persons would not be an obstacle to the organizational and technical efforts of those States that were parties to the existing instruments and thus might reduce the effectiveness of their efforts.

10. **Ms. Zhang** Dan (China) said that officials in developing countries often fled with public assets to developed countries, where they abused the judicial system. She asked how the Convention against Corruption could be used to enhance international cooperation in order to retrieve stolen assets and bring those responsible to justice.

11. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) noted that the Executive Director of UNODC had not referred to cooperation between the Office and the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI). Such cooperation was supported by a number of General Assembly resolutions. He wished to know whether the assistance provided by the Office to UNAFRI was sufficient, or whether further support was deemed necessary.

12. He further asked what efforts the Office had undertaken to investigate the crimes committed by peacekeeping forces in several countries.

13. **Mr. Babadoudou** (Benin) said that the Executive Director of UNODC had not mentioned connections between criminal activities and political actors such as secret services. He asked whether the mandate of UNODC allowed it to confront the issue.

14. He further noted that the Executive Director had referred to drug addiction as a social and health issue. He asked whether that approach entailed support for decriminalization of certain substances, a measure that could further complicate the Office's work.

15. Moreover, the Executive Director had, in giving percentages for drug addiction, referred to a category of persons of an age to consume drugs. Yet drugs were dangerous for all age groups. Such an attitude could contain an element of hypocrisy. He wondered if the Executive Director could clarify his views.

16. **Mr. Rastam** (Malaysia) said that increasing piracy in international waters and robbery at sea were a source of concern. He wondered if such issues were within the mandate of UNODC and, if so, whether UNODC, in examining organized-crime trends, might study the money-laundering aspects of ransom proceeds and the use of such proceeds for the purchase and trafficking of firearms, since pirates were using increasingly sophisticated weaponry.

17. **Ms. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) asked for further insight into the usefulness of developing a General Assembly plan of action against human trafficking, which Egypt supported in principle, on the basis of similar initiatives taken by African leaders, most recently at the summit of the African Union held in July 2008. She also wished to know if the representation of UNODC throughout the world was sufficient or if more regional and national offices were needed.

18. **Ms. Mbalia Eyenga** (Cameroon) requested additional information on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the feasibility of asset recovery, and asked what role UNODC played and what influence the Convention had on the principle of bank secrecy.

19. **Ms. Nawaz** (Pakistan) said it would be useful to have more information on the developments taking place at the current session in Vienna of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime if the General Assembly was to draw up a plan of action against human trafficking.

20. **Ms. Al-Zibdeh** (Jordan) wished to know more about existing initiatives for combating corruption in the Arab world.

21. **Mr. Costa** (Executive Director, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)) said it was important to distinguish the legal, technical role of the negotiations taking place at the current session of the Conference of the Parties in Vienna, which was attended only by those having signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational

Organized Crime, and the role of the General Assembly, which was to rally and express strong political will on the issue of human trafficking.

22. Operationally speaking, the Protocol was the best tool available to combat human trafficking. A statement by the General Assembly calling for universal ratification of the Protocol, especially for countries that truly needed such an instrument, was crucial for building political momentum. However, the Protocol was limited in scope; while it stated basic principles on prevention, protection and prosecution, it did not provide details on how to apply such principles, whereas a plan of action would.

23. Turning to the question put by the representative of Belarus, he said that although human trafficking was often simply seen as a crime, it was also linked to many other issues, such as a post-conflict situation or discrimination. A legal instrument such as the Protocol was important because it established parameters; however, the multifaceted problem of human trafficking could only be captured in a statement by the General Assembly and a plan of action.

24. On the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, he stressed that while it was not possible to impose such an instrument on any country, UNODC worked in cooperation with countries that had the political will to implement the Convention. After soliciting a State's interest, a mission was sent to the requesting State to determine the specific issues at stake and the type of resources involved. UNODC would then begin providing technical assistance.

25. There were three references to the principle of bank secrecy in the Convention, including in article 40, all of which stated that bank secrecy could not be considered an obstacle to domestic criminal investigations of offences established in accordance with the Convention.

26. Responding to the questions put by the representative of the Sudan, he said that regrettably, cooperation efforts between UNODC and institutes such as UNAFRI had not produced tangible results. Limited resources were often a problem, as such institutes had to operate within the budgets of the respective Governments, which often did not recognize the importance of preventing and suppressing crime. However, crimes committed by peacekeeping forces, did not come within the mandate of UNODC, but were referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

27. Turning to the question put by the representative of Benin, he said that States parties themselves were responsible for implementing conventions. Some States parties were more proactive than others in doing so, especially after a change in regime. A number of studies conducted around the world by UNODC to examine the interactions between crime and development had confirmed that poorer countries were more likely to have high rates of crime, partly owing to Governments' lack of control over their country's territory. The studies had examined to some extent the role of politics in crime and the fact that criminal leaders sometimes became political leaders. Currently, a major source of concern was that drug traffickers in West Africa were so wealthy that they could buy influence among parties, candidates or political processes.

28. He stood by his previous statement that drug addiction should be considered a health issue and not merely a lifestyle choice, as there were numerous factors, including genetics and environment, that combined to create a context of vulnerability, which in turn could lead to drug addiction. He was against drug legalization; however, decriminalization should be considered in the context of an individual's health. Putting drug addicts in jail did not make sense, as addicts needed therapy and a general change in their environment in order to undertake changes in their behaviour. The 14-to-64 age bracket had been used mainly because drug addiction under the age of 14 was uncommon. While drug addition was indeed dangerous for all age groups, it was important to focus on prevention in youth, because youth addiction more often than not led to life addiction. Likewise, it was crucial to focus on entry points, such as the taking of cannabis.

29. Responding to the question put by the representative of Malaysia, he said that piracy was a source of great concern and that UNODC had been meeting with the International Maritime Organization in London and other agencies of the United Nations system in order to find solutions. It was not within the mandate of the Organization to carry out physical interventions, but money-laundering of ransom proceeds, and piracy, as a form of kidnapping, certainly were. In that regard, there were elements in the United Nations Counter-Kidnapping Manual and other legal instruments that might be applied to piracy.

30. UNODC had offices in 52 countries. That number was insufficient, but UNODC could not build more

offices without an increase in the regular budget, which had been stagnating for several years. It was important for UNODC to be more present in the Arab world. One of its flagship regional projects had been developed in Iraq; to combat corruption he hoped more would be done in the near future.

31. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) requested further clarification on the answers to his two previous questions. He wished to know not so much the role of UNAFRI and similar institutes, but whether UNODC provided assistance to UNAFRI, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions proposed by the Committee. Regarding peacekeeping operations, he wished to know how exactly UNODC worked with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to improve crime prevention in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

32. **Mr. Costa** (Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)) said that no direct budgetary resources were devoted to assisting UNAFRI. As to the crime prevention in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations mentioned in his statement, he said it referred to the prevention of crimes committed not by DPKO, but by individuals in countries where there were such forces, with a view to promoting peace and not conflict.

33. **Mr. Fieschi** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and in addition, Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union acknowledged the central role to be played by international cooperation in combating transnational organized crime and supported the mechanisms for police and judicial cooperation among States. It also strongly supported the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme as well as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols and hoped that the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties would facilitate progress on implementation of the latter, including the issue of a follow-up mechanism. The European Union would take an active role in combating organized crime and impunity, in which technical assistance was key.

34. Only the combined efforts of the international community could resolve the issue of human trafficking. Coordination among States and relevant international organizations must be strengthened in order to make full use of existing mechanisms at all levels. The European Union welcomed the efforts of UNODC in the area of human trafficking, particularly in respect of the negotiations on the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; it also welcomed the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking, which had served to raise international awareness and encourage States to develop specific legislation to combat human trafficking.

35. Corruption was a major obstacle to sustainable development and good governance. States having ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption must continue their efforts to combat corruption, including by establishing a review mechanism to ensure implementation of the Convention. He hoped that the working group on that issue would conclude its discussions before the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties, to make it possible to adopt an instrument that would help Governments combat corruption more effectively.

36. The European Union condemned all forms of terrorism and commended the work of the Executive Directorate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, whose efforts had made a significant contribution to the fashioning of a global anti-terrorist network that fought terrorism while maintaining respect for human rights and the rule of law. It welcomed the first biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy undertaken by the General Assembly on 4 and 5 September 2008, which had underscored that consensus was possible in the fight against terrorism.

37. The response to terrorism must be firm but just, and undertaken with full respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law. In that context he recalled that the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance prohibited secret detention centres and was a valuable tool for the prevention of torture and degrading treatment and for upholding the rule of law. He stressed that respect for human rights was an asset, not an obstacle, in the fight against terrorism.

38. Drug abuse continued to destroy lives, support crime and threaten sustainable development. He therefore welcomed Security Council resolution 1817 (2008) calling for increased regional and international cooperation to counter the illicit production and trafficking of drugs in Afghanistan and to prevent the diversion of precursor substances for illicit use. The Government of Afghanistan and neighbouring and transit countries must ensure systematic notification of chemical precursors as provided for in the United Nations Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and should register with and utilize the PEN Online system for the exchange of pre-export notifications.

39. The European Union supported the international instruments that provided the foundation for international efforts to control the drug trade. It looked forward to the adoption of a political declaration following the high-level review to be held in 2009 in order to update the international community's efforts to combat the illicit drug trade and guide the Organization's future efforts with a view to reducing both supply of and demand for illicit drugs. Actions to combat the illicit drug trade must however be carried out in full conformity with international human rights instruments, respect for the rule of law, and the principle of proportionality.

40. The principle of shared responsibility was at the centre of the Organization's drug policy and it was no longer accurate to speak of producer and consumer countries; most countries were in fact both producers and consumers of illicit drugs. Every effort must therefore be made to ensure the success of the forthcoming high-level session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs with a view to implementing an effective policy for combating the drug trade in the coming decade.

41. **Mr. Nhleko** (Swaziland), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), reaffirmed their support for the fight against transnational organized crime and illicit drugs and for the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption. He expressed appreciation for the technical assistance provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in particular its regional office for Africa.

42. No single country could be responsible for crime prevention and for the improvement of criminal-justice systems, especially in a world where globalization had facilitated multinational criminal activity, seriously affecting the economic and social well-being of States. Coordinated international action was therefore necessary to combat crime and terrorism, including technical cooperation in such areas as the elimination of money-laundering and corruption and the strengthening of criminal-justice systems. Joint strategies should be implemented to promote regional police cooperation to combat violent crime against vulnerable groups, especially women and children, for example the course on violence against women and children organized in May 2008 by the Southern African Regional Police Chief Council Organization. He looked forward to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation strategy (A/63/99).

43. Terrorism could not be justified or tolerated. There must be a universal commitment at the national and international levels to suppress and eradicate that scourge. He therefore welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in implementing the universal conventions and protocols related to terrorism (A/63/89) and expressed support for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Regional and international cooperation in the fight against terrorism must be strengthened, in particular with regard to capacity-building for the drafting of legislation, the elimination of money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. International partners should continue to support the efforts of the SADC States.

44. He expressed support for the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and the SADC Protocol against Corruption. Institutions must be established and strengthened and provided with the resources to combat corruption at the national and regional levels. SADC had strengthened its collaboration with development partners and called for continued assistance, in particular in the area of investigative methods to counter corruption. Given the devastating effect of crime on national economies, he also called for increased resources for the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI), which would enhance the Institute's capacity to provide technical assistance to African countries for the fight against crime and the strengthening of criminal-justice systems.

45. He welcomed the increase in international cooperation against the world drug problem and progress made towards implementation of the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session, in particular in the areas of shared responsibility and national, regional and international efforts to reduce demand for and eliminate the supply of illicit drugs. He expressed concern that while use of cocaine and opium had decreased, consumption of amphetamine-type stimulants and cannabis continued to increase. Drug abuse and the associated problems of corruption, money-laundering and violent crime hampered social and economic development. SADC fully supported efforts to combat drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. In recognition that young people were a particularly vulnerable group, SADC had designed community-based programmes to educate them on the dangers of drug abuse.

46. SADC member States had signed the SADC Protocol on Combating Illicit Drugs and the SADC Protocol on Corruption and most of them had signed the United Nations Conventions against Transnational Organized Crime and against Corruption. Mindful of the need to act at the national and regional levels, SADC had implemented a regional drug-control programme. SADC supported the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on international cooperation against the world drug problem (A/63/111), in particular on the need for a balanced approach to the reduction of supply and demand, including with regard to allocation of funds.

47. The international community should continue to support SADC member States in implementing international legal instruments on drug control. SADC was committed to intensified international cooperation for the elimination of the illicit drug trade and for crime prevention and called for continued support for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

48. *Mr. Peralta (Paraguay), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

49. **Mr. Dapkiunas** (Belarus), speaking on behalf of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Uzbekistan, welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity (A/63/99) and expressed support for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and its strategy for the period 2008-2011. The legal workshop for CIS member States on nuclear, chemical and biological terrorism held in January 2008 was an example of cooperation between UNODC and the CIS Executive Committee, which should be strengthened.

50. The fight against terrorism at the regional and global levels was a priority for CIS member States. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy provided a solid basis for combating terrorism but its implementation was hampered by delays in the elaboration of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. All States should resolve existing disagreements and complete work on that important instrument.

51. The CIS States welcomed the recommendations of the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption in February 2008, which would be incorporated into a draft model law on corruption to be adopted by CIS. CIS also welcomed the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, currently under way; implementation of the outcome of that meeting would strengthen global efforts to counter crime.

52. The Heads of State of CIS had adopted a Declaration on coordinated migration policy to provide mutual assistance for the prevention of illegal immigration. A coordinating body had been established for that purpose. CIS was also working on the creation of special mechanisms to prevent and suppress the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, which was linked to crime and terrorism.

53. Cooperation among CIS member States for combating specific crimes was being formalized via recent agreements on countering money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, theft of cultural values and migration. Three midterm programmes on combating crime for the period 2008-2010 had likewise been adopted. CIS Governments also attached great importance to combating human trafficking: a cooperation programme for 2007-2010 had been implemented, two model laws had been adopted and recommendations had been made for the harmonization of trafficking-related legislation. Human trafficking was an increasingly serious problem and CIS supported the elaboration of a United Nations plan of action on preventing trafficking in persons, and would share its experience in that regard.

54. On 10 October 2008 in Bishkek, the Council of the Heads of State of CIS would discuss increased cooperation on a wide range of issues related to the fight against crime. Those discussions would contribute to the progressive development of cooperative efforts among CIS member States.

55. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan), speaking on behalf of member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), said that drug production, with its direct links to corruption, illegal migration, organized crime and international terrorism, had serious implications for international development. Drug abuse was also a key factor in the growth of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

56. CSTO members welcomed the UNODC *World Drug Report 2008* and would study the recommendations it contained. They supported the decision to hold a high-level event in March 2009, which would give new impetus to international efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking in order to move from the phase of containment to a considerable reduction in illegal drug usage.

57. The drug expansion in Afghanistan was a danger to security and stability throughout the world. The country accounted for 90 per cent of the global production of heroin, and a large proportion of the heroin seized in the territories of CSTO States was of Afghan origin. Drug abuse was increasing in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which were situated on the major drug-trafficking route from Afghanistan to CIS countries and Europe.

58. The drug market was currently restructuring, as poppy and cannabis were being replaced by more potent and dangerous drugs, such as heroin and opium. CSTO States were coordinating and harmonizing joint activities on a permanent basis in that regard. Some cooperation was taking place between law-enforcement and drug-control agencies of those States. Arrangements had been made to share information, operational investigative activities, cooperation and mutual assistance in eliminating illicit drugs and their precursors. The Paris-Moscow Process formed the basis for an international strategy to address the threat. Increasing the counter-narcotics cooperation between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and CSTO would make the regional efforts more effective. The full engagement of Afghanistan was essential to countering drug production there.

59. The Heads of CSTO member States had set the basis in 2003 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, for the international counter-narcotics operation "Channel". Another countermeasure was the Coordinating Council of the CSTO member States' anti-drug-trafficking authorities. The Coordinating Council had recently suggested that the "Channel" operation should be given permanent status. The number of participants and observers was growing every year and it had enabled the authorities of CSTO and observer countries to seize many tons of narcotic drugs.

60. The Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC), launched in 2007 through an initiative of Uzbekistan, was to be the central coordinating mechanism to fight trans-border drug trafficking and would cooperate with UNODC.

61. In November 2006, the CIS Council of Heads of State had approved a plan of action to implement the coordinated border policy of the CIS member States for 2007-2010. Recently, CIS member States had adopted a joint action programme to combat illegal trafficking for 2008-2010.

62. The capacities for combating drugs acquired by CSTO and through the Collective Security Treaty could benefit the entire international community. CSTO States were willing to cooperate with the United Nations and its Member States to create a unified anti-narcotics front.

63. *Mr. Majoor (Netherlands) resumed the Chair.*

64. **Mr. Collada** (Cuba) said that the gap between the developed and developing countries continued to widen, aggravated by external debt levels, unequal terms of trade, protectionism and decreased development assistance. Living conditions in the developing countries were deteriorating, leading to an increase in crime. He stressed therefore that the fight against crime should be based on addressing underdevelopment and the creation of a more just world order.

65. Technology had contributed to the spread of transnational crime and the emergence of supranational organizations with vast resources that undermined the stability of States. In a context of globalization, transnational organized crime and illicit drug trafficking were almost uncontrollable and no country alone could face the scourges of drug and human trafficking, crime and terrorism. The solutions were

well known and oft repeated, yet just as soon ignored or forgotten because they required a restructuring of the world order, respect for the principle of shared but different responsibilities, and domestic policies to ensure fair sharing of wealth.

66. Drug trafficking and its social and human costs constituted the most serious form of transnational organized crime. His Government was committed to regional and international efforts to combat that scourge, bearing in mind that the sovereignty of States must be respected and that the primary focus should be on States with high demand for illicit drugs.

67. There should be no double standard or hypocrisy in discussions of the problem of crime; no State should be singled out as good or evil. He deplored measures like the Cuban Adjustment Act, which encouraged illegal migration from Cuba to the United States, while the United States aspired to lead the fight against people smuggling. He found it paradoxical that Luis Posada Carriles, a known terrorist, lived unmolested in a State which held itself to be a champion of the fight against terrorism.

68. Despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States, his Government had achieved many successes in the fight against crime and drugs. Cuban legislation severely punished money-laundering, arms trafficking and organized crime. The cornerstone of its crime-prevention effort was education, especially for children and youth, and the reintegration of offenders into society. Cuba had participated in international efforts to combat transnational crime and the illicit drug trade and had entered into numerous cooperation agreements. It had even made concrete proposals to the United States, but they had been rejected. It would continue to cooperate with the United Nations in the areas of crime prevention and drug control.

69. **Mr. Johnson** (United States of America) said that corruption was a grave threat to all Governments and societies and created an enabling environment for criminals, insurgents and terrorists. His Government took global corruption seriously. The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act had been adopted as early as 1977, collaboration with foreign authorities on bribery cases had been enhanced and more effective use was being made of mutual legal-assistance mechanisms. At the Federal Government level alone almost 7,000 charges of public corruption had been laid. As a result, American companies had developed codes of conduct, anti-corruption training programmes and hotlines, and protection for whistleblowers. Such measures improved accountability and provided models of good governance while proving that compliance was in fact good business. Some multinational companies nevertheless continued to maintain hidden accounts and pay bribes, unbeknown to investors and regulators, running the risk of civil and criminal prosecution in the host and/or home country, and making their business operations dependent on corrupt officials.

70. The United Nations Convention against Corruption provided a framework for States individually and collectively to prevent corruption and the paying of bribes, recover stolen assets and facilitate international law-enforcement cooperation. There was an increased awareness of the destructive effect of corruption thanks to the Convention and high-profile investigations fuelled in part by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Anti-Bribery Convention and the actions of the World Bank, which disqualified corrupt companies from projects it financed. Corruption and transnational organized crime were two sides of the same coin; he called on the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols to strengthen understanding of how the Convention could be used to combat crime, and welcomed the fact that the number of legal assistance and extradition cases arising out of that Convention had risen by 50 per cent since October 2006. Much of the progress relating to those two Conventions could be attributed to the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and he urged Member States to increase their extrabudgetary contributions to UNODC; his Government would provide $21 million in 2008 alone.

71. He cited Colombia as a success story in the fight against international drug trafficking. With United States assistance, the Government of Colombia had launched a multi-year initiative to break the power of the drug cartels and insurgent groups that had been on the verge of turning that country into a narco-State. As a result, the rule of law had been dramatically strengthened, the economy had grown and the insurgent groups had been greatly weakened, with many of their members demobilized and reintegrating into society. Coca cultivation had levelled off and potential production had dropped significantly.

72. In Afghanistan, poppy cultivation had dropped sharply, thanks to the efforts of the international community and increased political will on the part of the Government and some key provincial governors. As a result of the expansion of the authority of the Government, all of northern Afghanistan was essentially poppy-free, with cultivation concentrated in Helmand province, where the Taliban was the strongest and Government authority the weakest.

73. The forthcoming high-level session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs should focus on coordinating security, governance, alternative development and the elimination of illicit drug crops. Member States should ensure that drug-control strategies were part of a comprehensive security strategy and should integrate marginalized regions into the political and economic mainstream. They should also make full use of extradition and legal-assistance mechanisms, implement legislation for special investigative techniques and prevent money-laundering and the diversion of precursor chemicals. In addition to such supply-reduction initiatives, Governments must increase access to comprehensive demand-reduction and drug-treatment programmes.

74. No country or group of countries could fight the drug trade, crime and corruption alone. That fight was a long-term one that would require fundamental changes in the way Governments worked. The high-level segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs should breathe new life into the United Nations conventions on corruption and transnational organized crime, which were the cornerstone of international drug-control cooperation. His Government applauded the work of the Organization in drafting and adopting those instruments and in particular the creative and courageous work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. It looked forward to continued close cooperation with Member States and UNODC in fighting the drug trade and international crime.

75. **Mr. Sumi** (Japan) said that globalization had increased the threat from transnational organized crime. Implementation of the relevant conventions and protocols formed a basis for the strong international cooperation and coordination required to address that problem.

76. Transnational organized crime, terrorism, drug problems and corruption were interrelated and required a comprehensive approach: establishing the rule of law, developing human resources and creating the necessary socio-economic infrastructure. Aid policy should include a human-security perspective.

77. Japan continued to support the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, which should play an advocacy role and be a tool to promote technical assistance. Japan had introduced national measures to eliminate human trafficking and provide assistance for victims, and had led the discussion on cooperation against human trafficking in the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

78. His country had already ratified all the international counter-terrorism conventions and their protocols. Japan had held annual seminars since 2003 to facilitate ratification and implementation in countries of the Asia and Pacific region.

79. The most recent summit of the Group of Eight had recognized the importance of ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the provision of technical assistance to partner countries. The Convention's review mechanism should be implemented in the near future. The United Nations Asia and Far East Institute (UNAFEI), based in Japan, organized training courses and seminars for officials from around the world. A seminar in early 2008 had enabled high-ranking criminal-justice officials to deepen their understanding of combating corruption.

80. Japan had made efforts over the past decade to meet the goals and targets set at the 1998 special session of the General Assembly. The problems caused by synthetic drugs in Asia, drugs in Afghanistan and illicit drug trafficking via Africa were growing worse. Japan had chaired the donor-coordination meeting on drugs to enhance the synergy of assistance and therefore welcomed the discussion held in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs concerning the special session. Japan would continue its campaign to free society from transnational organized crime, terrorism, illicit drugs and corruption.

81. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said he regretted that the order of the list of speakers had been changed without the Chairman consulting or even informing the delegations affected.

82. The draft resolution recommended by the Economic and Social Council in document A/C.3/63/L.2 built on long-standing efforts to combat transnational crime and would encourage further cooperation and aid

flows. It was also important to tackle poverty, which had contributed to the problem. There was therefore a need for sustainable development, the realization of the MDGs and a world order based on the fair distribution of wealth.

83. The Sudan had made considerable efforts to implement regional and international instruments concerning money-laundering, organ trafficking and transnational organized crime. In May 2008, the Sudan had hosted the tenth session of the Governing Board of UNAFRI, which had expressed its gratitude for the assistance provided by the United Nations. He urged Member States, non-governmental organizations and the international community to continue supporting UNAFRI in its valuable work.

84. The Sudan was enacting a number of programmes to combat drug abuse and trafficking, and was liaising with regional and international agencies. Human trafficking was also an urgent concern. It was essential to build on the results of the General Assembly thematic debate of 3 June 2008 and on the recent meeting of African leaders in Sharm el-Sheikh. The Sudan strongly supported current efforts to establish a global plan of action and would work closely with other delegations in order to do so: the challenges facing the world called for concerted action and greater technical support for developing States.

85. **The Chairman** expressed his hope that Member States would allow him some flexibility with the speakers' list in order to be able to accommodate speakers who could only be present at certain times. He had made similar adjustments at previous meetings and apologized if he had offended the representative of Sudan by not informing him of the change in advance.

86. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan), speaking on a point of order, said that the speakers' list had been drawn up well in advance and the previous changes had been made only when a speaker was not present in the room. It was unacceptable for a major Power to be suddenly given precedence over a smaller country unless the speaker was a minister of state or high-level official. He hoped that the situation would not be repeated.

87. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) said that the UNODC technical-assistance portfolio would only be effective if Member States took ownership of the reform process through long-term interventions. He commended the role of UNODC, while urging it to speed up the implementation of its strategy for 2008-2011.

88. Crime eradication and prevention remained a major concern of his Government, which was continuing its efforts to reform the criminal-justice system and enhance affordable access to it for the poor. Weaknesses in crime-detection and law-enforcement mechanisms were being addressed and the judiciary had been made independent of the executive branch. There was also emphasis on the regional dimension of crime prevention.

89. National strategies were inadequate for responding to transnational organized crime, as multiple jurisdictions and many different laws were involved. International cooperation should be developed under the aegis of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and Bangladesh supported all regional and international initiatives in that regard. The law-enforcement agency of Bangladesh worked in collaboration with its counterparts in other countries.

90. The independent Anti-Corruption Commission carried out investigations of high-profile financial crimes. Efforts to counter money-laundering were being strengthened in consultation with the relevant international agencies and development partners. The Government had taken measures to repatriate assets illegally transferred abroad. A UNODC technical-assistance project had contributed significantly to capacity-building for the relevant institutions, but further efforts were required.

91. Bangladesh had ratified all the international conventions relating to terrorism, and was in compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Anti-Terrorism Ordinance and the Anti-Money-Laundering Ordinance of 2008 had brought domestic legislation into harmony with international law. The country report of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate had expressed satisfaction with the counter-terrorism measures in place in Bangladesh. The sectors requiring technical assistance for capacity-building had been identified.

92. The Expatriate Labour Policy provided protection for migrant workers and facilitated legal action against illegal recruiters. Police anti-trafficking units and a witness-protection protocol provided legal assistance and crisis centres were also available.

93. Bangladesh was party to all three major United Nations drugs conventions and exchanged information on drug trafficking with other members of the South

Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). There were strict penalties for drug offenders and a National Drug Demand Reduction Strategy was in place.

94. Developing countries were particularly vulnerable to the rapid proliferation of crime in its newer manifestations and should be provided with the resources required to tackle them. Despite the excellent efforts of UNODC, its governance structure and financial situation should be enhanced and a global alliance forged with the international community.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.